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MOTORS AND MOTOR-DRIVING

By **ALFRED C. HARMSWORTH.**

With Contributions by the Marquis de CHASSELOUP-LAUBAT, The Hon. JOHN SCOTT-MONTAGU, R. J. MECREDY, The Hon. C. S. ROLLS, Sir DAVID SALOMONS, Bart., HENRY STURMEY, J. ST. LOE STRACHEY, The Right Hon. Sir J. H. A. MACDONALD, and others.

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

MAY 1902.

*The Disentanglers.*¹

VIII.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE LADY PATRONESS.

'I CANNOT bring myself to refuse my assent. It would break the dear child's heart. She has never cared for anyone else, and, oh, she is quite wrapped up in him. I have heard of your wonderful cures, Mr. Merton, I mean successes, in cases which everyone has given up, and though it seems a very strange step to me, I thought that I ought to shrink from no remedy——'

'However unconventional,' said Merton smiling. He felt rather as if he were being treated like a quack doctor, to whom people (if foolish enough) appeal only as the last desperate resource.

The lady who filled, and amply filled, the client's chair, Mrs. Malory, of Upwold in Yorkshire, was a widow, obviously, a widow indeed. 'In weed' was an unworthy *calembour* which flashed through Merton's mind, since Mrs. Malory's undying regret for her lord (a most estimable man for a coalowner) was explicitly declared, or rather was blazoned abroad, in her costume. Mrs. Malory, in fact, was what is derisively styled 'Early Victorian'—'Middle Victorian' would have been, historically, more accurate. Her religion was mildly Evangelical; she had been brought up on the Memoirs of the Fairchild Family, by Mrs. Sherwood, tempered by Miss Yonge and the Waverley Novels. On these principles she had trained her family. The

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result was that her sons had not yet brought the family library, and the family Romneys and Hoppners, to Christie's. Not one of them was a director of any company, and the name of Malory had not yet been distinguished by decorating the annals of the Courts of Bankruptcy or of Divorce. In short, a family more deplorably not 'up to date,' and more 'out of the swim' could scarcely be found in England.

Such, and of such connections, was the lady, fair, faded, with mildly aquiline features, and an aspect at once distinguished and dowdy, who appealed to Merton. She sought him in what she, at least, regarded as the interests of her eldest daughter, an heiress under the will of a maternal uncle. Merton had met the young lady, who looked like a portrait of her mother in youth. He knew that Miss Malory, now 'wrapped up in' her betrothed lover, would, in a few years, be equally absorbed in 'her boys.' She was pretty, blonde, dull, good, and cast by Providence for the part of one of the best of mothers, and the despair of what man soever happened to sit next her at a dinner party. Such women are the safeguards of society—though sneered at by the frivolous as 'British Matrons.'

'I have laid the case before the—where I always take my troubles,' said Mrs. Malory, 'and I have not felt restrained from coming to consult you. When I permitted my daughter's engagement (of course after carefully examining the young man's worldly position), I was not aware of what I know now. Matilda met him at a visit to some neighbours—he really is very attractive, and very attentive—and it was not till we came to London for the season that I heard the stories about him. Some of them have been pointed out to me, in print, in the dreadful French newspapers, others came to me in anonymous letters. As far as a mother may, I tried to warn Matilda, but there are subjects on which one can hardly speak to a girl. The Vidame, in fact,' said Mrs. Malory, blushing, 'is celebrated—I should say infamous—both in France and Italy, Poland too, as what they call *un homme aux bonnes fortunes*. He has caused the break-up of several families. Mr. Merton, he is a rake,' whispered the lady, in some confusion.

'He is still young; he may reform,' said Merton, 'and no doubt a pure affection will be the saving of him.'

'So Matilda believes, but, though a Protestant—his ancestors having left France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nancy—

Nantes I mean—I am certain that he is *not* under conviction.'

'Why does he call himself Vidame, "the Vidame de la Lain"?' asked Merton.

'It is an affectation,' said Mrs. Malory. 'None of his family used the title in England, but he has been much on the Continent, and has lands in France; and, I suppose, has romantic ideas. He is as much French as English, more I am afraid. The wickedness of that country! And I fear it has affected ours. Even now—I am not a scandal-monger, and I hope for the best—but even last winter he was talked about,' Mrs. Malory dropped her voice, 'with a lady whose husband is in America, Mrs. Brown-Smith.'

'A lady for whom I have the very highest esteem,' said Merton, for, indeed, Mrs. Brown-Smith was one of his references or Lady Patronesses; he knew her well, and had a respect for her character, *au fond*, as well as an admiration for her charms.

'You console me indeed,' said Mrs. Malory. 'I had heard——'

'People talk a great deal of ill-natured nonsense,' said Merton warmly. 'Do you know Mrs. Brown-Smith?'

'We have met, but we are not in the same set; we have exchanged visits, but that is all.'

'Ah!' said Merton thoughtfully. He remembered that when his enterprise was founded Mrs. Brown-Smith had kindly offered her practical services, and that he had declined them for the moment. 'Mrs. Malory,' he went on, after thinking awhile, 'may I take your case into my consideration—the marriage is not till October, you say, we are in June—and may I ask for a later interview? Of course you shall be made fully aware of every detail, and nothing shall be done without your approval. In fact, all will depend on your own co-operation. I don't deny that there may be distasteful things, but if you are quite sure about this gentleman's——'

'Character?' said Mrs. Malory. 'I am *so* sure that it has cost me many a wakeful hour. You will earn my warmest gratitude if you can do anything.'

'Almost everything will depend on your own energy, and tolerance of our measures.'

'But we must not do evil that good may come,' said Mrs. Malory nervously.

'No evil is contemplated,' said Merton. But Mrs. Malory, while consenting, so far, did not seem quite certain that her estimate of 'evil' and Merton's would be identical.

She had suffered poignantly, as may be supposed, before she set the training of a lifetime aside, and consulted a professional expert. But the urbanity and patience of Merton, with the high and unblemished reputation of his Association, consoled her. 'We must yield where we innocently may,' she assured herself, 'to the changes of the times. Lest one good order' (and ah, how good the Early Victorian order had been!) 'should corrupt the world.' Mrs. Malory knew that line of poetry. Then she remembered that Mrs. Brown-Smith was on the list of Merton's references, and that reassured her, more or less.

As for Merton he evolved a plan in his mind, and consulted Bradshaw's invaluable Railway Guide.

On the following night Merton was fortunate or adroit enough to find himself seated beside Mrs. Brown-Smith in a conservatory at a party given by the Montenegrin Ambassador. Other occupants of the fairy-like bower of blossoms, musical with all the singing of the innumerable fountains, could not but know (however preoccupied) that Mrs. Brown-Smith was being amused. Her laughter 'rang merry and loud,' as the poet says, though not a word of her whispered conversation was audible. Conservatories (in novels) are dangerous places for confidences, but the pale and angry face of Miss Malory did *not* suddenly emerge from behind a grove of gardenias, and startle the conspirators. Indeed, Miss Malory was not present; she and her sister had no great share in the elegant frivolities of the metropolis.

'It all fits in beautifully,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith. 'Just let me look at the page of Bradshaw again.' Merton handed to her a page of closely printed matter. '9.17 P.M., 9.50 P.M.' read Mrs. Brown-Smith aloud; 'it gives plenty of time in case of delays. Oh, this is too delicious! You are sure that these trains won't be altered. It might be awkward.'

'I consulted Anson,' said Merton. Anson was famous for his mastery of time-tables, and his prescience as to railway arrangements.

'Of course it depends on the widow,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith. 'I shall see that Johnnie is up to time. He hopes to undersell the opposition soap' (Mr. Brown-Smith was absent in America, in the interests of that soap of his which is familiar to all), 'and he is in the best of humours. Then their grouse! We have disease on

our moors in Perthshire ; I was in despair. But the widow needs delicate handling.'

'You won't forget—I know how busy you are—her cards for your party?'

'They shall be posted before I sleep the sleep of conscious innocence.'

'And real benevolence,' said Merton.

'And revenge,' added Mrs. Brown-Smith. 'I have heard of his bragging, the monster. He has talked about *me*. And I remember how he treated Violet Lebas.'

At this moment the Vidame de la Lain, a tall, fair young man, vastly too elegant, appeared, and claimed Mrs. Brown-Smith for a dance. With a look at Merton, and a sound which, from less perfect lips, might have been described as a suppressed giggle, Mrs. Brown-Smith rose, then turning, 'Post the page to me, Mr. Merton,' she said. Merton bowed, and, folding up the page of the time-table, he consigned it to his cigarette-case.

Mrs. Malory received, with a blending of emotions, the invitation to the party of Mrs. Brown-Smith. The social popularity and the wealth of the hostess made such invitations acceptable. But the wealth arose from trade, in soap, not in coal, and coal (like the colza bean) is 'a product of the soil,' the result of creative forces which, in the geological past, had worked together for the good of landed families. Soap, on the other hand, is the result of human artifice, and is certainly advertised with more of emphasis and of ingenuity than of delicacy. But, by her own line of descent, Mrs. Brown-Smith came from a Scottish house of ancient standing, historically renowned for its assassins, traitors, and time-servers. This partly washed out the stain of soap. Again, Mrs. Malory had heard the name of Mrs. Brown-Smith taken in vain, and that in a matter nearly affecting her Matilda's happiness. On the other side, Merton had given the lady a valuable testimonial to character. Moreover, the Vidame would be at her party, and Mrs. Malory told herself that she could study the ground. Above all, the girls were anxious to go: they seldom had such a chance. Therefore, while the Early Victorian moralist hesitated, the mother accepted.

They were all glad that they went. Susan, the younger Miss Malory, enjoyed herself extremely. Matilda danced with the Vidame as often as her mother approved. The conduct of Mrs. Brown-Smith was correctness itself. She endeared herself to the

girls: invited them to her place in Perthshire, and warmly congratulated Mrs. Malory on the event approaching in her family. The eye of maternal suspicion could detect nothing amiss. Thanks mainly to Mrs. Brown-Smith, the girls found the season an earthly Paradise: and Mrs. Malory saw much more of the world than she had ever done before. But she remained vigilant and on the alert. Before the end of July she had even conceived the idea of inviting Mrs. Brown-Smith, fatigued by her toils, to inhale the bracing air of Upwold in the moors. But she first consulted Merton, who expressed his warm approval.

'It is dangerous, though she has been so kind,' sighed Mrs. Malory. 'I have observed nothing to justify the talk which I have heard, but I am in doubt.'

'Dangerous! it is safety,' said Merton.

'How?'

Merton braced himself for the most delicate and perilous part of his enterprise.

'The Vidame de la Lain will be staying with you?'

'Naturally,' said Mrs. Malory. 'And if there *is* any truth in what was whispered——'

'He will be subject to temptation,' said Merton.

'Mrs. Brown-Smith is so pretty and so amusing, and dear Matilda, she takes after my dear husband's family; though the best of girls, Matilda has not that flashing manner.'

'But surely no such thing as temptation should exist for a man so fortunate as De la Lain! And if it did, would his conduct not confirm what you have heard, and open the eyes of Miss Malory?'

'It seems so odd to be discussing such things with so young a man as you—not even a relation,' sighed Mrs. Malory.

'I can withdraw at once,' said Merton.

'Oh, no, please don't speak of that! I am not really at all happy yet about my daughter's future.'

'Well, suppose the worst by way of argument; suppose that you saw, that Miss Malory saw——'

'Matilda has always refused to see or to listen, and has spoken of the reforming effects of a pure affection. She would be hard indeed to convince that anything was wrong, but, once certain—I know Matilda's character—she would never forgive the insult, never.'

'And you would rather that she suffered some present distress?'

‘Than that she was tied for life to a man who could cause it? Certainly I would.’

‘Then, Mrs. Malory, as it is awkward to discuss these intimate matters with me, might I suggest that you should have an interview with Mrs. Brown-Smith herself? I assure you that you can trust her, and I happen to know that her view of the man about whom we are talking is exactly your own. More I could say as to her reasons and motives, but we entirely decline to touch on the past or to offer any opinion about the characters of our patients—the persons about whose engagements we are consulted. He might have murdered his grandmother or robbed a church, but my lips would be sealed.’

‘Do you not think that Mrs. Brown-Smith would be very much surprised if I consulted her?’

‘I know that she takes a sincere interest in Miss Malory, and that her advice would be excellent—though perhaps rather startling,’ said Merton.

‘I dislike it very much. The world has altered terribly since I was Matilda’s age,’ said Mrs. Malory; ‘but I should never forgive myself if I neglected any precaution, and I shall take your advice. I shall consult Mrs. Brown-Smith.’

Merton thus retreated from what even he regarded as a difficult and delicate affair. He fell back on his reserves; and Mrs. Brown-Smith later gave an account of what passed between herself and the representative of an earlier age:

‘She first, when she had invited me to her dreary place, explained that we ought not, she feared, to lead others into temptation. “If you think that man De la Lain’s temptation is to drag my father’s name, and my husband’s, in the dust,” I answered, “let me tell you that *I* have a temptation also.”’

“‘Dear Mrs. Brown-Smith,” she answered, “this is indeed honourable candour. Not for the world would I be the occasion——”’

‘I interrupted her, “*My* temptation is to make him the laughing-stock of his acquaintance, and, if he has the impudence to give me the opportunity, I *will*!” And then I told her, without names, of course, that story about this Vidame Potter and Violet Lebas.’

‘I did *not*,’ said Merton. ‘But why Vidame Potter?’

‘His father was a Mr. Potter; his grandfather married a Miss Lalain—I know all about it—and this creature has wormed out, or invented, some story of a Vidameship, or whatever it is,

hereditary in the female line, and has taken the title. And this is the man who has had the impertinence to talk about *me*, a Ker.'

'But did not the story you speak of make her see that she must break off her daughter's engagement?'

'No. She was very much distressed, but said that her daughter Matilda would never believe it.'

'And so you are to go to Upwold?'

'Yes, it is a mournful place; I never did anything so good-natured. And, with the widow's knowledge, I am to do as I please till the girl's eyes are opened. I think it will need that stratagem we spoke of to open them.'

'You are sure that you will be in no danger from evil tongues?'

'They say, What say they? Let them say,' answered Mrs. Brown-Smith, quoting the motto of the Keiths.

The end of July found Mrs. Brown-Smith at Upwold, where it is to be hoped that the bracing qualities of the atmosphere made up for the want of congenial society. Susan Malory had been discreetly sent away on a visit. None of the men of the family had arrived. There was a party of local neighbours, who did not feel the want of anything to do, but lived in dread of flushing the Vidame and Matilda out of a window seat whenever they entered a room.

As for the Vidame, being destitute of all other entertainment, he made love in a devoted manner.

But at dinner, after Mrs. Brown-Smith's arrival, though he sat next Matilda, Mrs. Malory saw that his eyes were mainly bent on the lady opposite. The tennis of conversation, even, was played between him and Mrs. Brown-Smith across the table: the county neighbours were quite lost in their endeavours to follow the flight of the ball. Though the drawing-room window, after dinner, was open on the fragrant lawn, though Matilda sat close by it, in her wonted place, the Vidame was hanging over the chair of the visitor, and, later, played billiards with her, a game at which Matilda did not excel. At family prayers next morning (the service was conducted by Mrs. Malory) the Vidame appeared with a white rosebud in his button-hole, Mrs. Brown-Smith wearing its twin sister. He took her to the stream in the park where she fished, Matilda following in a drooping manner. The Vidame was much occupied in extracting the flies from the hair of Mrs. Brown-Smith, in which they were frequently entangled.

After luncheon he drove with the two ladies and Mrs. Malory to the country town, the usual resource of ladies in the country, and though he sat next Matilda, Mrs. Brown-Smith was beaming opposite, and the pair did most of the talking. While Mrs. Malory and her daughter shopped, it was the Vidame who took Mrs. Brown-Smith to inspect the ruins of the Abbey. The county neighbours had left in the morning, a new set arrived, and while Matilda had to entertain them, it was Mrs. Brown-Smith whom the Vidame entertained.

This kind of thing went on: when Matilda was visiting her cottagers it was the Vidame and Mrs. Brown-Smith whom visitors flushed in window seats. They wondered that Mrs. Malory had asked so dangerous a woman to the house: they marvelled that she seemed quite radiant and devoted to her lively visitor. There was a school feast: it was the Vidame who arranged a hurdle-race for children of both sexes (so improper!), and who started the competition.

Meanwhile Mrs. Malory, so unusually genial in public, held frequent conventicles with Matilda in private. But Matilda declined to be jealous; they were only old friends, she said, these flagitious two; dear Anne (that was the Vidame's Christian name) was all that she could wish.

'You know the place is *so* dull, mother,' the brave girl said. 'Even grandmama, who was a saint, says so in her *Domestic Outpourings*' (religious memoirs privately printed in 1838). 'We cannot amuse Mrs. Brown-Smith, and it is so kind and chivalrous of Anne.'

'To neglect you?'

'No, to do duty for Tom and Dick,' who were her brothers, and who would not greatly have entertained the fair visitor had they been present.

Matilda was the kind of woman whom we all adore as represented in the characters of Fielding's Amelia and Sophia. Such she was, so gracious and yielding, in her overt demeanour, but, alas, poor Matilda's pillow was often wet with her tears. She was loyal; she would not believe evil: she crushed her natural jealousy 'as a vice of blood, upon the threshold of the mind.'

Mrs. Brown-Smith was nearly as unhappy as the girl. The more she hated the Vidame—and she detested him more deeply every day—the more her heart bled for Matilda. Mrs. Brown-Smith also had her secret conferences with Mrs. Malory.

'Nothing will shake her belief in that man,' said Mrs. Malory.

'Your daughter is the best girl I ever met,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith. 'The best tempered, the least suspicious, the most loyal. And I am doing my worst to make her hate me. Oh, I can't go on!' Here Mrs. Brown-Smith very greatly surprised her hostess by bursting into tears.

'You must not desert us now,' said the elder lady. 'The better you think of poor Matilda—and she *is* a good girl—the more you ought to help her.'

It was the 8th of August, no other visitors were at the house, a shooting party was expected to arrive on the 11th. Mrs. Brown-Smith dried her tears. 'It must be done,' she said, 'though it makes me sick to think of it.'

Next day she met the Vidame in the park, and afterwards held a long conversation with Mrs. Malory. As for the Vidame, he was in feverish high spirits, he devoted himself to Matilda—in fact, Mrs. Brown-Smith had insisted on such dissimulation, as absolutely necessary at this juncture of affairs. So Matilda bloomed again, like a rose that had been 'washed, just washed, in a shower.' The Vidame went about humming the airs of the country which he had honoured by adopting it as the cradle of his ancestry.

On the morning of the following day, while the Vidame strayed with Matilda in the park, Mrs. Brown-Smith was closeted with Mrs. Malory in her boudoir.

'Everything is arranged,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith. 'I, guilty and reckless that I am, have only to sacrifice my character, and all my things. But I am to retain Methven, my maid. That concession I have won from his chivalry.'

'How do you mean?' asked Mrs. Malory.

'At seven he will get a telegram summoning him to Paris on urgent business. He will leave in your station brougham in time to catch the 9.50 up train at Wilkington. Or, rather, so impatient is he, he will leave half an hour too early, for fear of accidental delays. I and my maid will accompany him. I have thought honesty the best policy, and told the truth, like Bismarck, "and the same,"' said Mrs. Brown-Smith hysterically, "'with intent to deceive.'" I have pointed out to him that my best plan is to pretend to you that I am going to meet my husband, who really arrives at Wilkington from Liverpool by the 9.17, though the Vidame thinks that is an invention of mine. So, you see, I leave without any secrecy, or fuss, or luggage, and, when my husband comes here, he will find me flown, and will have to console himself

with my luggage and jewels. He—this Frenchified beast, I mean—has written a note for your daughter, which he will give to her maid, and, of course, the maid will hand it to *you*. So he will have burned his boats. And then you can show it to Matilda, and so,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith, 'the miracle of opening her eyes will be worked. Johnnie, my husband, and I will be hungry when we arrive about half-past ten. And I think you had better telegraph that there is whooping cough, or bubonic plague, or something in the house, and put off your shooting party.'

'But that would be an untruth,' said Mrs. Malory.

'And what have I been acting for the last ten days?' asked Mrs. Brown-Smith, rather tartly. 'You must settle your excuse with your conscience.'

'The cook's mother really is ill,' said Mrs. Malory, 'and she wants dreadfully to go and see her. That would do.'

'All things work together for good. The cook must have a telegram also,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith.

The day, which had been extremely hot, clouded over. By five it was raining: by six there was a deluge. At seven, Matilda and the Vidame were evicted from their dusky window seat by the butler with a damp telegraph envelope. The Vidame opened it, and handed it to Matilda. His presence at Paris was instantly demanded. The Vidame was desolated, but his absence could not be for more than five days. Bradshaw was hunted for, and found: the 9.50 train was opportune. The Vidame's man packed his clothes. Mrs. Brown-Smith was apprised of these occurrences in the drawing-room before dinner.

'I am very sorry for dear Matilda,' she cried. 'But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. I will drive over with the Vidame and astonish my Johnnie by greeting him at the station. I must run and change my dress.'

She ran, she returned in morning costume, she heard from Mrs. Malory of the summons by telegram to the cook. 'I must send her over to the station in a dog-cart,' said Mrs. Malory.

'Oh, no,' cried Mrs. Brown-Smith, with impetuous kindness, 'not on a night like this; it is a cataclysm. There will be plenty of room for the cook as well as for Methven and me, and the Vidame, in the brougham. Or *he* can sit on the box.'

The Vidame really behaved very well. The introduction of the cook, to quote an old novelist, 'had formed no part of his profligate scheme of pleasure.' To elope from a hospitable roof, with a married lady, accompanied by her maid, might be an act

not without precedent. But that a cook should come to form *une partie carrée*, on such an occasion, that a lover should be squeezed with three women in a brougham, was a trying novelty.

The Vidame smiled, 'An artist so excellent,' he said, 'deserves a far greater sacrifice.'

So it was arranged. After a tender and solitary five minutes with Matilda, the Vidame stepped, last, into the crowded brougham. The coachman whipped up the horses, Matilda waved her kerchief from the porch, the guilty lovers drove away. Presently Mrs. Malory received, from her daughter's maid, the letter destined by the Vidame for Matilda. Mrs. Malory locked it up in her despatch box.

The runaways, after a warm and uncomfortable drive of three-quarters of an hour, during which the cook wept bitterly and was very unwell, reached the station. Contrary to the Vidame's wish, Mrs. Brown-Smith, in an ulster and a veil, insisted on perambulating the platform, buying the whole of Mr. Hall Caine's works as far as they exist in sixpenny editions. Bells rang, porters stationed themselves in a line, like fielders, a train arrived, the 9.17 from Liverpool, twenty minutes late. A short stout gentleman emerged from a smoking-carriage. Mrs. Brown-Smith, starting from the Vidame's side, raised her veil, and threw her arms round the neck of the traveller.

'You didn't expect *me* to meet you on such a night, did you, Johnnie?' she cried with a break in her voice.

'Awfully glad to see you, Tiny,' said the short gentleman. 'On such a night!'

After thus unconsciously quoting the *Merchant of Venice*, Mr. Brown-Smith turned to his valet. 'Don't forget the fishing-rods,' he said.

'I took the opportunity of driving over with a gentleman from Upwold,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith. 'Let me introduce him. Methven,' to her maid, 'Where is the Vidame de la Lain?'

'I heard him say that he must help Mrs. Andrews, the cook, to find a seat, Ma'am,' said the maid.

'He really *is* kind,' said Mrs. Brown-Smith, 'but I fear we can't wait to say good-bye to him.'

Three-quarters of an hour later, Mr. Brown-Smith and his wife were at supper at Upwold.

Next day, as the cook's departure had postponed the shooting party, they took leave of their hostess, and returned to their moors in Perthshire.

Weeks passed, with no message from the Vidame. He did not answer a letter which Mrs. Malory allowed Matilda to write. The mother never showed to the girl the note which he had left with her maid. The absence and the silence of the lover were enough. Matilda never knew that among the four packed in the brougham on that night of rain, one had been eloping with a married lady—who returned to supper.

The papers were 'requested to state that the marriage announced between the Vidame de la Lain and Miss Malory will not take place.' Why it did not take place was known only to Mrs. Malory, Mrs. Brown-Smith, and Merton.

Matilda thought that her lover had been kidnapped and arrested, by the Secret Police of France, for his part in a scheme to restore the Royal House, the White Flag, the Lilies, the children of St. Louis. At Mrs. Brown-Smith's place in Perthshire, in the following autumn, Matilda met Sir Alymer Jardine. Then she knew that what she had taken for love (in the previous year) had been,

Not love, but love's first flush in youth.

They always do make that discovery, bless them !
Lady Jardine is now wrapped up in her baby boy.
The mother of the cook recovered her health.

(To be continued.)

In a Devonshire Garden.

I. AT SEED-TIME.

THERE are moments—I suppose everyone has them—when one is inclined to rail at Destiny because certain things are enjoyed by others but withheld from himself. I try to do Destiny justice at such times. It is true, I tell myself, that you are, well, not so rich as you might be, not so good as you ought to be, nor so young as you used to be, and so forth; but, after all, you have this Devonshire garden of yours—don't forget that! Set it down to Destiny's credit, my friend, and write it bold and large.

Let me count up some of the delights of this garden of mine. In the first place it is in Devonshire: that, with all deference to and admiration for many beautiful sister counties, goes for something, for it means rich soil and soft air, and the earliest of early flowers and fruit. Then I can stand where I will within the limits of its walled acre and gaze my fill at the sea; and if there be no bird singing, my old friend, gently lapping the beach down there, or roaring in crested waves upon the higher shingle, always has a word for me. Then my garden slopes to the southward. Even at this winter season it is a delight to see the red earth smile up at the day, before ever a leaf or a blade has appeared to dash its ruddy face with spring green. For the soil here, coloured by old Devon sandstone, smudges red, not brown; in the sunshine it is good to look at, its broad smile seems to cheer the heart.

Then there are the birds, of whom I mean to say a great deal; they are interesting at all seasons. Then the rest of the community having a vested interest in the place: the field mice, the hedgehog and others; I admit all their rights.

Lastly, there are the potatoes, whose career begins long before spring, and whose culture is of immense interest to me; for I am assured that the little, the very little, gardening talent I possess is purely utilitarian. I know little of the culture of flowers: I leave

such matters to my betters; but in the growing of vegetables, and especially potatoes, my horticultural instincts find full satisfaction. I love to take a potato, as it were by the hand, and lead him gently through the trials of his career: to plant him, to watch for his new appearance, to tend him in babyhood, to hoe him in his early youth, to earth him up in his adolescence, and finally to bring him at maturity to the triumphant harvesting.

In the little circle of those who, like myself, are at home in my Devonshire garden, I am an acknowledged artist in potatoes; and there my reputation for gardening begins and ends. Occasionally I aspire to extend my efficiency to other branches of the art. At such times, if I say that I will go out to do a little gardening, I can generally—if I look for it—detect the embryonic beginnings of an indulgent smile upon the features of Someone whose word in the garden, even for the professional artist we hire for a daily wage, and of whom, except in the matter of potatoes, I stand in terror, is law. Perhaps she will softly suggest, according to the season of the year, that she had thought I had already hoed all the potatoes, or that surely my seed potatoes are all planted—in a word, she regards my sphere of usefulness in the garden as strictly limited to operations connected with the culture of potatoes. She is right, no doubt; I am no gardener, though I trust I shall not be condemned as a boaster if I suggest, in all modesty, that my cutting of asparagus is not inartistic; that I can decapitate with some skill a cabbage or a lettuce, I can also dig up celery and pull rhubarb, and I can mow the lawn and roll it.

However, it is known that potatoes are my *cheval de bataille*, and I am given scant credit for proficiency in any other branch of gardening. Thus, if I take a small hoe, and make as though I would wage war upon certain weeds that have caught my eye, I am quickly accompanied. I discern that I am distrusted. It is pointed out, perhaps, when I have nervously begun my work, that the little plants I am now destroying are not weeds, but baby broccoli or lettuce. Must it be admitted?—I once ruthlessly immolated an entire border of cherished little plantlets of *mignonne*, just showing their heads above the earth.

All this tends to make me distrust my own efforts in scientific gardening, and drives me back, if I may so express it, to my potatoes. Thus during the months of November, December, and January my occupation is gone: I must sit and wait until February, in which month I may joyfully begin my gardening year by 'starting' my seed above ground and by planting it before

the month is out. But long before February the thrushes burst into an occasional rapture of melody—'Summer is coming,' they sing,

'Summer is coming.

I know it, I know it, I know it!'

and the song gives me heart of grace.

The robin, too, pipes daily requests that I will come and dig worms for him; but I am well aware that this is mere indolence on his part, for the ground is soft—too soft to be pleasant for him who would dig it, and my friend can easily obtain his own worms.

When, at last, February comes, my utilitarian instinct awakes to a new lease of life: I must dig and dig, work out the weeds, turn the soil and prepare it well with seaweed or other richness; above and beyond everything, get out my seed potatoes and gloat over them—the early ones. I must see that each little oval has its sturdy sprout or two before planting; that sprout means the gain of three weeks of time. So, at last, I sally forth with spade and basket to begin the season's digging, but I do not set out alone. The dog Ebenezer, otherwise known as the Autocrat, comes also. He runs in front of me, looking back over his shoulder, and his pale eye has a forbidding expression; so, at least, the ignorant would think it. It is nothing of the sort, as a matter of fact. He merely desires me to hit at him with my spade, in order that he may bark at me and keep up a running fight, that's all. It is a point of etiquette with him that there must be no barking or ballyragging until I shall have given the signal, except in certain contingencies, when he reserves the right to consider my permission given; as, for instance, if I use the long wooden rake, the Autocrat instantly falls upon that implement at sight, rendering my work very difficult by trying to worry the teeth as they move along, to the great jeopardy of his own. Neither may I roll the lawn without subjecting the heavy stone roller to his attacks.

No sooner do I set spade to earth than someone, who has been watching my arrival, well aware of my intentions, instantly appears from heaven knows where, and sits looking at me in profile, his neat little head cocked on one side, his bright little eye unwinking, fixed upon me: the robin. He is quite close, within a yard of me, for this robin and I are old and tried friends; possibly he regards me as his slave; at any rate, he knows very well that his expectations will not be disappointed, for my spade constantly reveals to him bounteous stores of

luscious worm-food; nor, indeed, is he slow to help himself to the choice morsels as soon as uncovered.

The worthy individual who rented this garden before me must, I think, have manured his beds with old tennis-shoes and watered them with empty bovril-bottles and sardine-tins; for though his tenancy expired some years ago, his 'remembrances,' in the shape of the above articles, recur at almost every spadeful of earth that is dug up, if one digs deeply. That is why the Autocrat is so intensely interested in my work, almost as deeply so as the robin. Perhaps he is guiltily conscious that he too has buried certain treasures here and there: well-gnawed bones that will not yield another taste, but from which, nevertheless, no other dog may derive even the pleasures of hope. The Autocrat is very young; to dig up an old shoe and hand it to him is to afford him exquisite delight until he has wearied of the plaything and left it or reburied it. But resurrect an old bone and he will take it with a grave face, if not with an actual growl, and disappear with it for quite a long while. There is always hope for him in a bone; it is also for ever a *casus belli* with dog or man if either be bold enough to interfere while the Autocrat is in possession.

There is nothing like seaweed for potatoes. Dig your ground in deep trenches; lay three inches of rotting seaweed in the first and fill up with the earth you dig out of the second, and so on. While doing so you will wish with all your heart that the sense of smell had been denied you, but tribulation is good for the soul, and your suffering to-day will ensure you a hearty, goodly, merry crop of potatoes. Plant them shallow and loose; and—another and valuable secret for those who would do well with their tubers—keep the earth around the plants loose from beginning to end of their career. If you do these things, perhaps you will have early potatoes in the open by the third week in May, as we do; find a Devonshire garden with a slope southwards, and you shall be sure of it. Just now someone who is not a true member of our garden community passed along the path to see what I was doing—a rat. Unfortunately, we have rats in the garden. Their arrival dated from the time, a few years since, when my reputation as an artist in potatoes began to circulate above ground and below it. The pioneer was a large, cunning, hungry rat that came from I know not whence to batten upon my potato-pile in the outhouse. This rat was possessed of a devil. He had no fear, but his strategy was marvellous. He did not live in the outhouse: it was his

banqueting-hall, and he feasted upon my substance with impunity until—— But let me tell the story of his career, working backwards from the happy day of its ending.

On the morning of that glad day a strange terrier suddenly ran into the backyard; something, I suppose, prompted him to look in and see what was going on in our premises. His sudden arrival resulted in a great tragedy, though his short stay in the yard was to him a season of unmixed happiness. He merely ran in and, almost instantly, ran out again; but during that instant he caught, seized, and slew our large, devil-possessed, garden rat. Now I had compassed the destruction of that rat for a very long time, but my schemes had invariably failed. Many terriers, known to local fame as inveterate rat-slayers, had been introduced to its haunts, had followed its scent with excitement, had pulled a beautiful bank to pieces—that in which was concealed the entrance to his castle—destroying it with ardour and regardless of the damage to property and feelings. They had watched day-long at his hole; it was all in vain. A year ago Someone had set a large and—as she informed me—unfailing rat-trap for the enemy, and on the same day at lunch-time had met the rat walking quietly homewards with the bait, a long piece of cheese, lying crosswise in his mouth. He winked his eye—or she imagined it—and passed on. It was, she admits, a humiliating moment. I have seen to it that Someone is not allowed to forget this tale. It is mentioned whensoever reference is made to a certain mignonette border once accidentally mistaken for weeds and zealously destroyed. About this time that rat found a mate. I knew he had done so: I saw the lady; and after a while I saw worse things. Five small creatures would accompany her when she visited her restaurant—the ashpit—for her meals. Occasionally their invincible father accompanied them, but I think he preferred to take his meals alone; possibly he regarded the tradition as to safety in numbers as illusory. Now, without being of a cruel and bloodthirsty disposition, I must confess that I was deeply anxious that someone, cat, dog, or brickbat, should find means to make an end of that family—at any rate of the mother and infants: one had given up hope of vanquishing the invincible sire.

It was about this time that the Autocrat came to us; a delicious, round-limbed, overbearing, overwhelming Irish terrier pup, whose experience of this world and its troubles dated from but a very few months back. The Autocrat was chained up in the

yard by reason of his overwhelmingness. If he were allowed to enter a room, everything in that room fell down within a very few minutes, for nothing could withstand the whirlwind rush of his circular gallop. He is made upon a very large scale, and his puppyish awkwardness is most pronounced, so that he cannot be allowed alone in the garden any more than in the house, therefore he is chained up in the yard; and here that misguided lady-rat met with an adventure at his hands which went near to proving the end of her natural career. The Autocrat was heard to be yelping in a distressed manner one afternoon, when it occurred to someone to see what ailed him. Then it was discovered that he had caught the rat as she ran across the yard; further that he held her tight pinned to the ground by his paws, and that he did not know what to do with her. Perhaps the Autocrat was in his extreme youth troubled with a conscience; if so, he has since quite grown out of the weakness. He did not know whether the rat was fair game or a pet. Unfortunately he misunderstood the instructions instantly given him and he let her go. Those instructions were, of course, untempered by merciful considerations. He was told, I believe, to 'worry the brute,' but unfortunately he was afraid of making a mistake, and she escaped.

Soon after she was caught by a friend of the Autocrat and killed, and one by one the young ones fell to the same experienced jaws. But the old sinner, the father, was never brought to book until the morning upon which a strange terrier darted into the yard at the fatal moment, and succeeded by accident where every deeply laid design had failed! Alas, before that catastrophe happened the old rascal had married again and reared children and grandchildren to his name, chips of the old block every one of them, who laugh at traps, treat the cat with contempt, and frighten the Autocrat out of his wits. Moreover, every thief of them has fattened his carcase upon my artistically grown potatoes, upon my strawberries (to which both they and the hedgehog are inordinately addicted), and upon everything in the garden that is tasty and toothsome. I sometimes meet one strolling along the paths, when he will scarcely condescend to go aside out of reach or to hide himself until I have passed. The rascals believe themselves to possess hereditary rights in the garden: a claim which I cordially dispute, though I admit that of every other bird and beast of our community.

The Autocrat uses the garden as a kind of cemetery for every-

thing for which he has no immediate use. He comes by various articles without regard for considerations of honesty. If he likes the look of any such trifle as a shoe, a glove, a parcel, he will first take it out upon the lawn and play with it, worry it gently with blunted teeth, growl over it, arguing with an imaginary claimant to the treasure. Wearying of this, he will carry it to some piece of ground where the earth is soft and bury it there.

One day while digging in the garden I made a discovery of immense importance to a certain very small member of the establishment: upon the brown earth and partly buried therein lay a pair of tiny doll's trousers. How had these small articles come there? I looked at the Autocrat, who promptly averted his face, which means that the Autocrat pleads guilty. It occurred to me to carry the garment to someone who was at that time greatly interested in such things, concluding that it must surely belong to one of her numerous family.

Then ensued complications in that family which I little suspected when I innocently restored the treasure-trove to its owner. I had been made aware before this that one of her dolls was 'an invalid for life,' but to all inquiries as to the cause of so great an affliction, the only reply forthcoming had been that he was 'too ill ever to get up any more.' His illness was now explained. Their little owner received the new-found garments thoughtfully, and without the joy one expected to hear expressed.

'Aren't you glad to get them back?' we asked. 'They're a little soiled, but nurse will wash them and they'll be all right.'

'It isn't that,' she said. 'The Invalid was going to change into a girl to-morrow, you see, and was going to come down to stay with the others; now he'll have to be just himself again, and get up, and the visitor can't come. They *were* so looking forward to it!'

Somewhat puzzled, we asked for more light.

'Well, you see,' she explained, 'he had to be an invalid for life because he had lost these and couldn't get out of bed. So he was going to change into a girl to-morrow, because I've lots of girls' frocks; and as she hadn't ever been a girl she had to be a visitor—pretending, you know—and they were all so looking forward to his—*her* coming to-morrow.'

The little head of the family was not disappointed, however, nor her expectant flock either, for though the Invalid rose from his bed of sickness a girl doll from the country came also, so that in spite of these complicated family arrangements the find proved

of great importance to several members of the establishment.

Even the kitten likes gardening. Her share of the work consists in stalking the worker, darting out from unexpected places, losing heart when she has covered half the distance, and quickly darting back under cover.

The blackbirds have no confidence in the kitten; they regard neither her youth nor the season of the year. 'A cat,' they say, 'is a cat, whether young or old, whether we have our bantlings to keep out of her clutches or whether we have only our own skins to protect!' Therefore they cursé her at sight. Up hill and down dale they curse her, pursuing her with maledictions wherever she goes. You may know at any moment exactly where she is, because blackbird *père* and *mère* follow her up; and this spoils her stalking game, for naturally her surprises do not come off while two spiteful, sharp-tongued persons are for ever sitting or flitting over her head scolding, chiding, cursing, pillorying the poor thing until she must be sick to death of their voices.

What a nuisance they must be! They will not even allow her to sleep peacefully in some sunny spot she has found and occupied, but plant themselves close by to keep her awake with their maledictions. No wonder she rises presently, glares in their direction for a moment with a cold eye, opens her mouth as though to say something, shakes herself, and goes home in disgust.

If she had spoken just now, instead of discreetly controlling her temper, she would have said, 'All right, my friends, wait till next May or so, and maybe I'll give you something to curse about; I am told garden-fed young blackbird is alluring. I may even catch *you* in the strawberry net, you yellow-beaked old sinner! and if I do, *mon ami*, I shall gnaw your head!'

'Our kitty would never, never do such a horrid thing,' remarked the owner of the Invalid. And when reminded that a thrush had been caught in the net with its poor head bitten clean off, she explained that this happened before the kitten was born, which was true.

'Kitties don't eat the birds,' she said, 'nor do pussies; it's only horrid *cats*.'

'Aren't pussies cats?' we asked in our crass and helpless ignorance; and it was then we received the following explanation, which is quite convincing.

A kitty, it appears, is the 'little kitten that plays.' A pussy is the same animal come to its respectable maturity; a soft, clean,

cosy thing that cuddles up on one's knee or lies before the fire. But a cat is a horrid lean thing, 'that crosses the road very quickly in the evenings, creeping along, and goes into the opposite garden.'

'And what are the things that squall in the night?' I asked.

'Cats, of course!' she said. 'As if our dear, sweet little puss would be so horrid.'

Alas! I have known kitty's mother disgrace herself in this way of a dark night; but there—let her keep her reputation. To give pussy away and brand her for the cat she is would occasion grief in certain quarters—let the old sinner pose for the saint she is believed to be! Last year a strange cat—no question of passing as a pious pussy this one!—brought into being and successfully reared a whole family of youngsters in one of my potato trenches. She established herself there after the last earthing, just as though she knew that she would then have three months, if she liked, of undisturbed domestic felicity. She would never have been discovered at all but for the fact that two small chickens were presented to the Invalid's mother and placed for the night in a home improvised from a packing-case with wire netting to form a 'run.'

In the morning the chickens were not. The home was empty, the wire netting had been climbed upon and bent over, and a tell-tale track of feathers led to the spot in which was now discovered the little feline establishment above mentioned.

Their disappearance had to be accounted for in some less tragic manner, for the true tale of their hard fate would have occasioned a sorrow too great to be borne. They must have felt nervous of sleeping in a strange place, it was said, and therefore went home to their mother. 'But how did they find their way?' it was asked, and, alas!—for falsehood breeds falsehood—quite a series of fibs had to be composed before the explanations were found convincing.

There is something very fascinating about the digging up of a mature potato plant. It is so deliciously prolific. The sight of a dozen strapping sons of a poor little wizened tuber but half the size of a bantam's egg is most exhilarating. What a return for one's outlay!—two thousand per cent. at least, judged by weight; how generous nature is! There is something, to me, so alluring in the excitement of digging up the plants and revealing the wonderful things that summer-tide has been doing, unseen, beneath the surface that—must I confess it?—I waste many

plants during the growing season through sheer inability to keep my hands off them. I must dig one up, from time to time, to see how they are getting on; yea, though I am well aware that I spoil a plant at each foolish surrender to curiosity, and though there are those about me who are certain to observe the evidence of my weakness and to laugh me to scorn therefor!

I think some of the birds know well enough what is the meaning of the beginning of work in the garden. When they see me, for instance, beginning to busy myself with seed potatoes about February, they say to one another, 'Look, there's what's-his-name beginning to dig worms; that means summer's coming!' and lo! one is suddenly charmed at his work by the first outburst of the familiar thrush-song, or the first joyous notes (like the beginning of a merry whistled lilt by some happy schoolboy) of the jolly blackbird. Then, if you watch, you may see the beginnings of a nest in this plum-tree or that cherry, and presently the nest is finished and duly equipped with a complement of eggs. Most likely it will soon be deserted, for there will be cold winds and dank weather, and dear, sanguine Mrs. Thrush will see that she has been misled by the February sunshine and the delusive occupation of the worm-digging human. But this will not damp her spirits, nor in any way depress that splendid vocalist, her burly lord. They will wait a bit, and then quietly build another nest and lay a second batch of eggs as if nothing had happened.

I have heard it declared that each individual thrush prefers to use one particular stone for the breaking of his snail-shells; but our thrushes seem to be quite impartial as to this; they leave fractured remnants all over the garden, though certain stone steps outside my study door are perhaps the favourite, and certainly a highly convenient place for the purpose. All day I can hear the 'tap tapping' as old Father Thrush dashes some poor snail, house and all, against the sharp corners. I think they are his favourite food. What a wonderful ear the fellow has for worms, too! He can hear one moving underground. Watch him stand upright and listen on the lawn. Suddenly he has heard a worm behind him, maybe, and three yards away; but in an instant he is over the spot, his beak plunges into the earth with almost unerring certainty, and out comes the poor wriggling victim. There is a gobble and a gulp, and lo! it has disappeared and he is listening for another. All the birds in my Devonshire garden are fat; the place suits them.

So are the field-mice, of which we support, I believe, several

families. One such family I rudely unearthed yesterday—though quite accidentally. My spade happened upon a nest of seven—nearly full-grown, fat, chubby little things—and sent them flying with a clod of earth it brought up. It was the absurdest thing to see the drowsy little creatures struggle to their feet and make off in a sleepy fashion, apparently but little put out by their wholesale and sudden upheaval. One little fellow ran back over my foot, and stopped a yard away to rub his eyes with his fists and—yes, actually *yawn*. None of them took the trouble to hurry themselves, and their hiding was merely perfunctory; I could see and might have killed every one of them, but spared them for two (if not more) reasons; one, that I don't think they do much harm excepting to eat up any peas or other seeds that happen to be planted where they come across them; and, two, that I believe I have a kind of superstition, borrowed from the Greek Church, anent the sparing or releasing of birds and beasts.

I have read somewhere that the release of a caged bird represents, for the orthodox, a sin forgiven—during Lent, at any rate. This is a pretty and withal a convenient doctrine, for it is worth while hedging a little when it is so easily done; though, as I was rudely informed, when mentioning the tradition to a friend and my liking for it, 'it would have to be a very large bird to do *you* any good, old chap.'

I forgave this ill-mannered remark because I happen to know that the idea took root in that rude fellow's imagination and bore fruit. Not long afterwards he was passing, he told me, an unoccupied house a mile away from his own, when he observed a starling within beating itself against the closed windows in unavailing efforts to get out, having imprisoned itself by falling down the chimney. My friend actually took the trouble to return to the town, procure the house-agent's keys, and release that starling. I forgive him, as I say, his rude remark for this act, and I hope the recording angel will take as lenient a view of his bad manners and forgive him also.

I must say I like starlings. Their energy delights and their vocal efforts fascinate me. In feeding they are the most catholic of birds, and will sample anything. I have seen them fight over a bit of indiarubber, part of an old tennis-shoe. Towards humans they are among the most friendly of birds.

There is one particular hedge-sparrow in the garden who has, for some reason, a rooted antipathy to me. He chides and curses me at sight. The garden, he thinks, is not big enough for us

two; and he is clearly of opinion that I am the one who ought to go. I tolerate the impudent little rascal for his sublime impertinence, even though I am almost certain he robs my pea-pods, which is really rather a serious offence, for there are plenty of other foodstuffs for him, and peas are an acquired taste and a vicious withal.

How many weeks ought to elapse between the sowing of a potato and its maturity as an 'Early,' which, of course, is only semi-maturity? Of all the kinds I have tried, I find the quickest grower is 'Early Puritan,' and that from start to finish, that is from planting to boiling, he requires from ten to eleven weeks.

Ashleaf, a yellower and firmer potato, takes a week or two longer. If you would have my opinion on the best potatoes to sow for maincrop, I give it with all the self-satisfied confidence of the amateur: try 'Up to Date,' the cleanest, prettiest, best cropping, and best keeping potato under the sun; this with all deference to many other excellent varieties, such as Windsor Castle, Scotch Kidney, White Elephant, and others. With deference, also, to the opinions of those whose knowledge in comparison with my own is as fifty to one. But remember to plant your seed shallow and loose, and to keep the earth loose about the growing plants. When you have finally earthed them up, keep your hands off them if you can, and don't dig up one here and another there to see how they are getting on; they will get on all right; this, however, is a counsel of perfection, for I confess that I cannot do as I preach in the matter of keeping my hands off.

I suppose it is an inherent taint in my nature, but I must confess that I do love the speculative element in the growing of potatoes: digging up the plant is like dipping in the bran-tub or drawing your ticket at a lottery; it is the uncertainty that is so fascinating, the faint atmosphere of gambling that clings to the function. One sees the peas or the beans, the apples or the plums grow and mature under one's eyes: one is sure of them beforehand, and knows approximately what may be expected from each plant. But the tuber grows and develops in secret; adding ounce to ounce underground he may, for all one knows, be assuming enormous proportions; each spade-turn, when digging-up time begins, may reveal the champion potato, some enormous fellow of the size of a small Rugby football: the excitement does one good, and gives a zest to life so long as it lasts.

With me, in my Devonshire garden, it lasts a fairly long time,

for I plant some four thousand seed potatoes every spring. The digging up of these—of the early detachment—begins in May; when these are all up I have to possess my soul in patience for three months, from July till the end of September, and it is during this period of inactivity that my fingers itch to sample a potato-plant here and another there, in order to satisfy that craving for knowledge of what is going on beneath the surface, which can only be satisfied by sneaking into the trenches when certain persons are not looking and digging up just *one* plant, and perhaps afterwards just *one* other.

March is a busy month—the most important of all in a garden, and the work is done to the unceasing music of the birds. Throughout this month and April every winged thing is intoxicated with love-ardour. My lord blackbird, even though he were shy hitherto, has no time now for foolish fears; the days grow longer daily, but they are not long enough for the joy of living.

‘Go it, ye cripples, dig for your lives!’ he seems to troll out in his merriest stave, as Garge the gardener and I ply our spades for all we know, saving this profitable hour. ‘Dig up the worms for me and my missus; five lovely eggs, my dear sir, and every one of them going to hatch out into a blackbird—think of that!’

And old Johnny Thrush, but a few yards away, takes up the tale with his ‘Baby Jem, Baby Jem, Baby Jem! Oh the jolly time, oh the jolly time! See my missus, see my missus! She’ll do it, she’ll do it, she’ll do it!’

And do it she will. She will hatch out those pretty blue eggs of hers and rear her little speckled family of Baby Janes and Baby Jems, until suddenly there are half a dozen little strangers, fat, full-grown fledglings, running and flitting about the garden, hiding from the cat, and waiting for the ripening of the strawberries which have grown with them.

Luckily for a certain artist in the potato department, they can’t get at his bantlings; but Heaven help all the fruit—currants, strawberries, raspberries, cherries—which is not netted in time! for if the season be dry, every little rascal of a thrush and each little villain of a blackbird will account for several times his own weight of fruit *per diem*.

‘Leave saucers of water about,’ say the gardening papers, ‘and thus save your currants and other juicy fruits.’

Leave the water about by all means, say I: the little rascals will be delighted to see it; they will bathe in it and enjoy themselves amazingly: but do not make the mistake of supposing that

they will spare your fruit therefor! On the contrary, bathing promotes appetite, and they will return to your strawberries with renewed vigour and capacity.

Do you know who has lately—that is, last summer—been convicted of strawberry-stealing? One who was never suspected, whose character—as an insectivorous and wholly praiseworthy person—was ever believed to be unimpeachable: the old hedgehog. The crime was brought home to him, however, upon irrefutable evidence; he was caught red-handed. Nay, more; though carried away and placed a hundred yards out of temptation, he returned again and again to the scene of his dishonesty; he would have strawberries; and nothing but strawberries, during their season, was good enough for him.

A remarkable thing this: that so many of the birds are taken in by a few warm days in February or early March. Let the sun but shine brightly for a few hours, and the fancy of a dozen pairs of little winged lovers in this garden turns as naturally as possible to thoughts of nest-making and family rearing; old stagers too, some of them, who have wasted a nestful of eggs many a season before this, and should have acquired—one would think—the wisdom of waiting.

Some, on the other hand, are not taken in by the sham spring-tide; they wait, and doubtless laugh at those who allow themselves to be deceived.

Have you ever watched a pair of sparrows when first the house-hunting and building mania comes upon them? How stupendously busy they are, especially the cock, and what a tremendous lot he has to say! As a matter of fact, his missus does all the real work, and he supplies all the theory, which she consistently disregards.

Not that Mrs. Sparrow works impetuously, as though time permitted of no deliberation. On the contrary, she uses the greatest deliberation in the performance of every action, however trivial. Watch her when she is considering the eligibility of, let us say, a bit of string which she has found in the garden path, as material to be used in the building of a nest over which she is busy. First she will sit upon a gooseberry twig a yard or two away, and inspect that morsel of string from the south-east.

Then she will flit over to the apple-tree close by and study it from the north-west. Then she will examine it from other points of the compass. At last she will hop up to it and pull it about—apparently accepting it, but rejecting it again, still uncertain as

to its suitability for some purpose exactly defined in her foolish little mind. At last she will decide to use it, and, seizing it, she will fly up to her nest with the treasure; but, vacillating once again, she drops it at the very threshold, and sits upon the roof a little while, eyeing it and chattering; explaining to her lord, perhaps, that it would have done well enough if it had been longer or shorter, or thicker or thinner, or Heaven knows what. Finally she will flit down and carry it away to use, and behold! to-morrow she has turned it out once more, and it lies upon the garden path a rejected thing. Not for long, however, for either she herself or some other bird has removed it next time one looks for the much-considered scrap.

That conceited and self-assertive little person her lord and master is far less deliberate in his actions. He is more certain of himself, being convinced that he knows everything, and that to consider and weigh and deliberate is a waste of time.

He is anxious to help with the nest-making, and holds forth without ceasing while his lady builds. Occasionally he lends a hand. He catches sight of a straw, it may be, or a small piece of stick, and it occurs to him that here is the very thing his foolish wife has sought for days and failed to find. What does *not* occur to him is that he is a garrulous old incompetent, and knows no more about nest-building than he does about the laying of eggs. His wife knows all about him, however, and the straw is turned out of the nest again as soon as his back is turned. He has probably placed it in some impossible position, and—after explaining what a marvellous fellow he is, and what a treasure he has brought up in the way of building-material—departed, forgetting all about the matter in a moment or two. Even when he sees that straw lying upon the garden path, so conceited is he that he does not recognise it, because he cannot contemplate the possibility of its rejection by the missus. He thinks he has found another treasure. ‘There,’ says he, dumping it down by her side as she sits resting, perhaps laying a little egg, in the semi-completed nest; ‘there’s another splendid straw; how is it you don’t come across them? I can find them whenever I like!’

Someone has somewhere declared that of all birds the sparrow is the only one who is positively harmful in a garden—does, that is, more harm than good.

I am afraid there may be truth in the saying; for indeed he is a terribly mischievous little rascal, there is no escape from that fact. His appetite—of course—is absolutely unlimited, and he

will eat almost anything. One would forgive him his appetite, however, for after all he is easily stuffed with crumbs from the table and such delicacies, and the young shoots should thus be saved from his depredations. But, alas! he is harmful out of pure mischief. He picks off the fruit buds from currant and gooseberry bushes without the smallest intention of doing anything more than tasting each and casting it aside; and he will nibble the shoots of baby sweet-pea plants just to see what they are made of and what manner of flavour is theirs, his wicked little carcase being, at the time, so stuffed with good breadcrumbs and other delights that he scarcely has energy enough to be mischievous.

How the young sparrows survive their youthful days is always a mystery to me; for of all the overfed little rascals in the garden, they are by far the worst.

This for two reasons: first, the sparrow, I always think, is a bad parent in that he is too easily talked over by his plausible youngsters, and believes them because they have inherited from him the gift of the gab; and secondly, because these same youngsters are such little liars from the first that they are able to persuade their parents—who ought to know that no child of theirs is likely to be truthful—that they have not tasted a particle of food, even when they are actually at the moment, to express it mildly, replete.

Yet, for all their wickedness, I think I would not have my sparrow community away. I like them; they are jolly, animated little bodies, and their twittering is welcome sometimes, when there are no grander voices to be heard in the garden. Moreover, I admit their vested right as members of the garden society. One can discount their mischief by taking proper precautions against it beforehand: as by dusting soot over the sweet-pea lines, or squirting with quassia any bushes or trees liable to their depredations.

Now, in February, when other important matters are going on in the garden as well as the planting of potatoes, one cannot afford to forget these precautions, for that mischievous brown imp Jock Sparrow is not the only person who will look out for the upcoming of the earliest pea shoots. If we would have our first dish of peas by the first of June—and we sanguinely hope, in our Devonshire garden, that this will be the case—we must see that the lines are well peppered with soot; for Jock and others know very well that we have planted peas, and that certain tender and succulent little green growths will presently result, which may be nibbled

down to the roots with profit and enjoyment. Look out, too, for the earliest buds on your plum-trees and your peaches; for Jock has his eye on all these, and even though he be not hungry, he will destroy them in the wanton desire to pass his time as mischievously as possible. But the sun has come out, and a thrush is trolling out a full-pitched song—

‘Summer is coming, Summer is coming.

I know it, I know it, I know it!’

Every day he sings it with more insistence; he is so sure of it that one must take his word and hasten to get through with the sowing of those early potatoes.

The earth is almost carmine as it smiles up at the sunshine; down below the sea looks patchy in bright greens and very dark blues, and the gulls on the shore are dazzling white as they stand, face to the wind, doing nothing. Friend robin flits in front of the window, challenging attention. ‘Come out and dig me some worms,’ he is saying as plainly as actions can say it. A second thrush has embarked upon his bracing song: ‘Oh, the jolly time,’ he repeats; and then, ‘See my missus—see my missus!’

‘Summer is coming,’ replies insistently Number One. ‘I know it, I know it, I know it!’

Poor old thrush, he is one of the deluded ones, and will presently back his conviction that summer is coming by persuading his faithful spouse to set up her springtide establishment many a week too soon. Summer will come, thank goodness, but it is still three months away!

All that these three months mean for the garden, all the magic that will go on beneath the surface of the earth during that period, what human mind could fully imagine?

For there is not an inch of soil that will not presently be instinct with silent, teeming life; every particle of every tree and shrub, above ground and below, will be alive with moving sap, and the spirit of growth will be a-hum everywhere.

These very seed potatoes which I am now planting, only think what is before them during these twelve weeks! For they must first put out shoots upwards and form roots downwards; then, while they themselves rot and disappear, their progeny must take shape in the silence and darkness which is beneath this red earth. I, with my hoe, shall do what I can for them up here, and they in their secret cells will develop day by day; and lo! by the end of the three months all will be over with them: the growing and the

hoeing finished, the rapture of their up-digging enjoyed, even their cooking happily accomplished—they will have been eaten, perhaps praised, certainly forgotten. *Sic transit gloria*. Meanwhile I am only dibbling them in, to the tune of 'Summer is coming. I know it, I know it, I know it!'

FRED. WHISHAW.

A Man in the Making.

IN May 1887 Lawrence Haynes's mother wrote to me :
 'Lawrence has been overworking. If you would really like him to spend a month or so with you this summer, I'm sure it would be good for him. He can read for his B.Sc., and there will be no evening meetings to distract him. I think he calls himself a Socialist now. At any rate, he has a great many friends of both sexes who come and sit on the rug by the fire and smoke and call each other by their Christian names. But you know Lawrence, and he is only twenty.'

From childhood Lawrence had been sent to us whenever he was out of sorts. I had been his elected Auntie then, and was Auntie still.

For some years, however, we had not met, and I looked forward eagerly to his coming. As a schoolboy Lawrence had no awkward age; he had retained the warm interest in his fellows which had marked him as a child, and an instinctive courtesy which sometimes contrasted oddly with his embarrassing frankness of speech.

Suppressing my fear that after the society which his mother described he might find Tom and myself a little dull, I sent off the invitation. A few days afterwards he arrived, late in the evening, having carried a heavy bag from the station. Next morning he came to breakfast looking tired and serious, and bringing a stale scone left over from the journey, which he insisted on eating before touching fresher food.

In the course of the day he several times spoke of 'The Movement.'

I asked at last, 'What movement?'

He fixed his kind young eyes on me, and, evidently not believing that my ignorance was genuine, returned to his book without answering.

After dinner, when Tom had gone to his study, Lawrence asked if he might bring some papers into the drawing-room.

I remonstrated with him for working late, but he said it was only a mechanical job.

As I sewed by the fire he made a copy in aniline ink of a document before him, and then began to take off impressions from a tray of white jelly.

'What's that?' I asked, as the curled sheets made a little heap by his side.

'A manifesto.'

'A manifesto!' I repeated, impressed by the word; and, putting down my sewing, I unrolled a sheet and began to read the faint purple writing

'Dear Comrade,—In view of the approaching Social Revolution——'

'Don't read it out,' said Lawrence, 'look it over quietly and let me know if you're in sympathy with us.'

I read in silence. The manifesto explained that it was impossible for us to predict exactly when the Revolution would come. It was impossible (although here some of his comrades might differ) for us to avert it by tinkering at social injustices. Because of their recognition of this truth a serious accusation had been brought against them. It was said that the Socialist League was not a practical body. Let them, then, see to it that in the smallest particulars they prepared themselves for the new life.

From this point in the manifesto there followed temporary rules of conduct for all members of the 'League,' at once so child-like and so tyrannous that I could have laughed, but that Lawrence's face opposite to me made laughter impossible.

'You can't seriously mean,' I said, 'that you think it wrong to eat two eggs for your breakfast?'

Lawrence left the writing-table and did not directly answer that question. Standing with his back to the fire, and looking down at me with all his old frank courtesy, he said that he positively hated to see me living in this senseless luxury.

I was a little taken aback, for I had been in the habit of pluming myself on my cheerful acceptance of straitened circumstances.

'Isn't there anything you could cut off?' he demanded.

Then I made a mistake.

I suggested that he was very young. Directly I had done so I was sorry, and fearful lest, by my stupidity, I had lost the chance of a talk.

'Oh, you middle-aged, you middle-aged,' Lawrence broke out in his fine deep voice.

I was relieved if not flattered.

'It is to me,' he went on, 'the most extraordinary assumption that the opinions and feelings we have in middle age are more likely to be true than those we have in youth. Surely, Auntie, if the faults of youth are recklessness and hopefulness, the faults of middle age are self-indulgence and cowardice. Doesn't Meredith say that only at the two gates of life, in youth and age, can we hope to catch a glimpse of the larger truths?'

'The idea is so common,' he said in a quieter tone, 'that I have tried to think it out, and, indeed, I cannot see why the fact that I am young should be used as evidence that I am wrong.'

'Tell me,' I said after a silence, 'what has made you so different since I saw you last?'

'Oh, walking in the streets—reading—thinking——' and, sitting down by the fire, Lawrence began to talk as he might have done to one of his own intimates.

Then I realised for the first time how strong the social emotion was in him. I tried to make him believe that some old-fashioned Radicals felt such things in their own way.

He shook his wise-looking head. 'One and all they accept the competitive system. We don't.'

Then I said frankly that I had been told that several of his 'comrades' in London were men of bad personal character.

He did not, as I had expected, indignantly deny it. He might not approve of the actions of individuals, but for himself he felt more tolerant of offences against the accepted law and morality than of the universal crime of the middle classes—indifference to the suffering by which they lived.

While Lawrence was gathering up his manifestos before going to bed, he said: 'I'm afraid that I shan't have many evenings in. Luckily, the "League" has just started a branch here.'

After that I only caught occasional glimpses of Lawrence. No Cabinet Minister could have been more fully occupied. I was troubled, since he was said to be overworking, at the amount of time his connection with the movement absorbed. During his short stay with us he wrote for the Branch papers on the following subjects: 'The Economics of Karl Marx,' 'Our Relations with the Anarchists,' 'Are we ready for Revolution?' 'The Blindness of Herbert Spencer.' For each of these he read a good deal, and

each was worked up into something like literary form; for he showed me such passages as he thought I was ready for.

He came home after the meetings, where his audiences had numbered five, eight, three, and seven respectively, perfectly satisfied and full of hope for the future. Since his arrival the Branch had developed wonderfully. A paper had been started, a weekly social evening arranged, and an open-air address was given every Sunday afternoon. The subscriptions and collections had gone up to 5s. 3d. a week, and at a social as many as forty people might turn up.

I felt sure that this activity could not be maintained on 5s. 3d. a week. I knew that Lawrence pinched himself in the smallest particulars, and I suspected that the main part of his allowance went to supporting the paper and to alleviating, to some extent, among members of the Branch, the injustices of the competitive system.

On this subject I dared not speak.

When I spoke to Tom he only said: 'Oh, none of the Hayneses are fools; a nice, straight fellow like Lawrence will grow out of all that fast enough.'

Meanwhile, with increasing frequency, Lawrence mentioned the name of a new comrade, Nelly Montgomery. At first sight one mightn't like her, he said. But how unjust one's first impressions often are! She had thrown herself whole-heartedly into the movement and worked every evening at the Circle. I could not realise what that meant, for all day long she was in a barracks of a shop.

A fear, of which I was ashamed, possessed me; and yet what an appeal this girl—herself a victim of the system, and now steadily preparing for the revolution by pouring out tea for the comrades—must make to Lawrence's imagination!

More than once he said to me, 'I admire her immensely'; and once, to my great relief, he added:

'Not that in your sense of the word, or indeed in the sense of the word that I was brought up to accept, she is exactly a nice girl——'

But I did not know Lawrence yet. The demands on his time increased. Opportunity even for a few words together came now very rarely.

One evening, after dinner, Lawrence, although he had a pre-occupied air, as if he were going to make a speech of great public importance, lingered in the drawing-room. Every moment

I expected him to go off to the room that we had dedicated to him.

But to my surprise he sat down on the rug, and looked into the empty grate.

Something was coming. I felt the tension in the air.

'Auntie!' A long pause.

'Auntie, Nelly Montgomery has promised to be my wife.'

I sprang off my seat, and Lawrence got up and stood opposite to me.

The eternal absurdity to the middle-aged of the really young taking their lives into their own hands, and my innate snobbery, left me speechless; and then Lawrence's words: 'Not in our sense of the word *nice*,' came back to me.

A vision of his mother rose before me; and overpowering everything the thought of this boy's happiness. I still could not speak, but Lawrence guessed.

'Lawrence,' I said at last, 'I dare say I'm a snob and prejudiced; but tell me she's a straight kind of woman—and then tell me you care for her, and I'll do my best.'

'Auntie, she's a great deal better woman than many a girl you and mother would be pleased enough for me to marry.'

'Be just to us,' I said.

There was a long silence.

'Mother isn't to know for six months. Nellie wishes us to feel free, and it will be at least two years before I earn enough to marry on.'

A little sigh of relief came from me.

'Do you care for her, Lawrence?' I asked it cruelly straight.

Lawrence evaded again; and I might have had an essay on the New Marriage, where public aims were always first, private happiness always second.

But I could not stand more than a word or two of it. Pent-up feelings were growing foolishly strong within me, and they burst out.

'Believe me or not—movement or no movement—you, Lawrence, must love the woman you marry. Life will never be easy for you. You are flinging away the chance of the one big thing that will help you to endure and be sane.'

I stopped, and we looked at each other. From Lawrence's face I believed that I had stirred some feelings which he had known before he joined the movement.

After a minute he said in his usual voice: 'Oh, Auntie,

Auntie, I wish you were with us. There are moments when I feel that you were never meant for a conventional person.'

Lawrence and I did not speak again on this subject for some weeks.

He was even more fully occupied than before, and I could not detect the least sign of uneasiness. On everything but his engagement he was as communicative as ever when we met.

The paper was selling capitally. Oh, no, of course not yet a financial success; but there was to be a double summer number, illustrated. It would not cost much; he could just manage to advance a little for it. Besides, they had ten new members. The numbers might seem small to me, but it was best to keep out all except those who are really in earnest.

Lawrence had asked Tom to sell a gold watch-chain for him. It was plain where the proceeds went.

'I'm awfully sorry to go, Auntie.'

He had only three days more with us, and we were alone after dinner.

I looked at him and saw that he was unusually pale. From the point of view of rest the visit had not been a success.

My heart sank when I thought of his next quiet talk with his mother.

'Will you tell your mother about——?' I was saying in a constrained voice.

'I'd just come to tell you; it's all over.'

I could hardly keep decently quiet, the joy of relief was so great.

Lawrence was walking rapidly up and down the room, a thing he never did in talking.

'She chucked me,' he said.

'Oh!' I gasped.

He came up and stood by the mantel-piece, and said frankly, 'I bored her.'

I had never seen Nelly, but I could believe it. Lawrence in these days was a strenuous person.

'How?' I asked.

'Reading aloud, I believe. I read her all my things in the rough.'

I was quite silent. I dared not speak. To him my joy must seem brutal.

'I knew you would be glad,' he said, understanding the long quiet. 'That doesn't matter; you can't understand.'

Again there was silence, and just one small fear lest he had suffered made itself felt.

After a pause, in which Lawrence played with the little things on my mantel-shelf, he said impetuously: 'Auntie, what I feel the most tragic thing about all this is that there are moments when I'm glad.'

It was Lawrence's last evening, and it seemed to me that when Tom went to his study we were going to have a quiet time together.

Lawrence was sitting in a low chair.

Again he said: 'I'm sorry to go, Auntie. Still, I think I've helped to put this Branch on its feet. And I'm ever so much better, thanks to you.'

I had never seen him look thinner.

'You haven't changed a bit,' I said, 'not since you were——'

'Oh, indeed,' he interrupted me; 'please don't. I really have, Auntie. When I was a schoolboy I was the most atrocious little snob.'

'I wasn't going to say anything about schoolboys; I was going to say since you were five.'

Lawrence smiled.

Just then a note was brought for him.

He opened it, and started up.

'I must be off to the League. I don't know what's happened. It's just a line from Swift, asking me to come at once.'

'So goes our last evening,' I thought; but I knew that the Branch took its affairs seriously, and prominent members could not enjoy private life without interruption.

When Lawrence came back at about eleven, he looked really worried and agitated.

Heaven send it was no further complication with the girl whom he had described as not nice in the sense of the word he had been brought up to accept.

It was not, and I breathed more freely.

'It's Barnett, Auntie. He's gone off.'

Lawrence was walking up and down.

'With the funds?' I asked immediately.

'Well, fortunately, there wasn't much in hand—it's only a matter of a pound or two; but the bills that we thought paid aren't paid.' Lawrence grew calmer as he spoke. 'It's very rough on Tilman and Green. Next month I can help a little. To-night

I could do nothing except speak a few words, trying to put this little discouragement in its right place. Of course they're absurdly down about it.'

I could not suggest to Lawrence the thought which came uppermost, that this branch of the League was practically dead; and so I only said:

'I'm so sorry you've had all this bother.'

'Oh, I haven't had the worst of it, and yet it's funny how feelings one used to have before one was in the movement cling. For a little while after I heard this I felt like a common fool—just because we made a mistake about *one* man.'

Lawrence was completely himself again, and I looked at his calm face in amazement as he turned to the writing-table and began to work.

During the last week the girl he had proposed to marry had thrown him over because he bored her; and one of the most trusted of his comrades had made off with what I knew was pretty well all his quarter's allowance.

'I shan't go up to bed just yet,' he said. 'I want to get off a few more of these.'

As I rose to say good-night, I looked over his shoulder.

'Dear Comrade,' he was writing, 'In view of the approaching social revolution——.'

ADA WALLAS.

La Grande Mademoiselle.

THE MILITARY MEMOIRS OF A PRINCESS.

‘CHARLES THE GREAT,’ says Shakespeare’s Archbishop Chichely in the course of his somewhat lengthy speech, ‘established then this law: “No woman shall bear rule in Salique land”’; ‘which law,’ as the Archbishop observes shortly afterwards, ‘was not’—or ought not to have been—‘devisèd for the realm of France.’ Frenchwomen have taken upon themselves to exact their revenge for this unchivalrous decree, and through all succeeding ages they have contrived to exert an influence over public affairs which is perhaps unequalled in the history of any other nation. If the statutes of the land denied them such a ruler as Queen Elizabeth or as Catherine of Russia, there was no law which could nullify such powers as were wielded by the ‘Women of the Salons,’ or, a century or two earlier, by the ladies of the Fronde, or by those of the court of Catherine de Medicis. Anne de Bourbon-Montpensier, ‘grande Frondeuse,’ holder of Paris and Orleans against the King, had little or none of the brilliant versatility which gave influence to so many of her countrywomen. Her conversational powers were not remarkable; her literary education certainly ceased at fifteen, if indeed it can be said to have ever begun; she wrote like a princess, in the sense in which Madame Lebrun told Louis XVIII. that he sang like a prince; so much so that, but for the assistance of a secretary, her memoirs would have been scarcely decipherable. Yet, even in the most cultivated *salon*, ‘la grande Mademoiselle’—the title itself is eloquent—was not a person whom it would have been possible to ignore. She carried with her a complete assurance of her position, an unwavering confidence in the superiority of the House of Bourbon over the rest of the human race, which would have enabled her to hold her own in any assembly. In her naïve arrogance, her careless good-nature to her subordinates, her capacity for preserving a reasonable amount of dignity

in the most untoward circumstances, she is as typical of the old *régime* as Madame Roland was of the new.

Her memoirs, which extend over the greater part of a life of sixty-five years, are of very unequal interest. But her martial triumphs, brief though they were, stand out as a picturesque episode in a more or less dreary record of court jealousies and intrigues; and it may be worth while to recall them, if only for the reason that they bring before us a type almost unknown to that period—the disinterested partisan.

Mademoiselle, Duchesse de Montpensier, Princesse de Rochesur-Yon, Princesse de Dombes, Duchesse de Chatelherault—to mention only a few of her titles—was born in Paris in 1627. She was the daughter of Gaston, Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIII., and better known in his time as ‘Monsieur’; and of Marie de Bourbon, heiress of the House of Bourbon-Montpensier. This lady, dying at her daughter’s birth, bequeathed to her lands and revenues enough to make her the richest princess in France, and a string of high-sounding designations, among which her baptismal name of Anne was almost forgotten. As the eldest daughter of ‘Monsieur,’ the unequivocal title of ‘Mademoiselle’ was hers by right, and by this style she was generally known; as to herself, she was quite ready to ignore any other form of address, for, in theory at least, she attached far more importance to her royal blood than to her ducal fortune.

She grew up at court, surrounded by the spirit of faction in its most acute form, herself an active member of a political party—not over scrupulous, perhaps, but marked throughout by a certain frankness of disposition which distinguishes her from most of her contemporaries. At six years old she was brought to see her father’s followers publicly disgraced at Fontainebleau. At thirteen she was the leader of a band of young ladies who revolted against the social supremacy of the Princesse de Condé, and wrecked her balls by using means of the most various kinds to prevent the guests from attending. In course of time several marriages were suggested for her, and among her suitors was the Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II., warmly encouraged by Queen Henrietta Maria, who, after the manner of her kind, was unfeignedly anxious that her impecunious son should take some step to retrieve his fortunes; but it was decided that a king who was apparently destined to spend his days in exile was no fitting match for an heiress of such importance. Indeed, before the events of the summer of 1652 there were many who considered that Mademoi-

selle need only play her cards well to be Queen of France. Her portrait is candidly given by a chronicler of the period in his account of the principal persons at court: 'hautaine, hardie, d'un courage plus masle que n'est ordinairement celui d'une femme . . . fière, entreprenante et libre à parler. Il est difficile que son cœur altier se puisse soumettre à la dominion d'un homme. . . . Elle est belle et de grande taille, d'une mine masle, une démarche libre, un port majestueux.' It must be admitted that her memoirs do not convey the idea of quite such a ferocious Amazon; and her manner of describing her feats of arms is essentially feminine.

When the political troubles which culminated in the War of the Fronde first took a serious aspect, Mademoiselle ranged herself, once for all, on the side of Monsieur, her father; that is to say, in steady opposition to the Queen Regent and Cardinal Mazarin. She was immediately signalised as one of the most pronounced *frondeuses*. Monsieur, who was seldom on good terms with his daughter, and had lately quarrelled with her over certain negotiations for her marriage, now saw that her high spirit might be turned to account. Condé, on whom the fortunes of the Fronde mostly depended, was in Guienne, and the young Duc de Beaufort—'le roi des Halles'—with other leaders of the popular party was determined upon holding the principal towns south of Paris against the Royal force, thereby assuring to Condé his line of communication. For this purpose everyone was of opinion that Monsieur himself must undertake the defence of the city of Orleans, where, though the authorities were inclined to submit to the King, the poorer townspeople still held to Gaston as their feudal lord. But it was in vain that Beaufort urged the necessity of this step; Monsieur, while outwardly consenting to act on the suggestion, was inwardly resolved to do nothing of the kind. It was not till he had reduced his adherents almost to despair that the idea was started of employing Mademoiselle as a substitute—a proposal which was no sooner mentioned than it was hailed with enthusiasm. She was known to be enterprising and, above all, reliable. 'C'est une brave fille,' the people said of her; 'elle portera une pique aussi bien qu'un éventail.' Moreover, she was delighted with the undertaking, though slightly ashamed of her father for letting her go. She made her preparations with all possible light-heartedness, and set forth undaunted, in a coach, attended by three of her ladies—Mesdames de Bréauté, de Fiesque, and de Frontenac. Monsieur stood at the window and saw them start; a truly original party for the attack of a fortified town.

Once outside Paris they were met by an escort of 500 horse, and the princess left her carriage to ride at their head, 'which,' she records, 'gave the soldiers great pleasure when they saw me; and the officers,' she naively adds, 'were even more pleased than if it had been Monsieur.' The words suggest a picturesque little scene. At Arthenay, about twenty miles from her journey's end, she met with the first signs of opposition. A messenger, one De Flamarens, came from Orleans to inform her that she was to be refused admittance; the citizens had shut the gates, and the King's army was advancing from the further side; she was therefore strongly advised to go no further, but to pretend illness, and not attempt to force a way into the town. Mademoiselle's reply was characteristic in the extreme. She dismissed the Duc de Rohan, who had escorted her till then, saying that she would not be responsible for so important a person; 'but as for me,' she continued, 'there is no question; I shall go straight to Orleans. If I can get into the town, my being there will encourage those who are serving his Royal Highness and convert those who are not. For to see persons of my condition exposing themselves in danger is a thing which inspires everyone'—'*cela anime terriblement les peuples.*' If she should be unable to gain an entrance she would retire to join the army under the Duc de Beaufort; and if, at the worst, she should be arrested, in any case she would fall into the hands of people who spoke her own language, and who would show her the consideration due to her birth.

With these conclusive arguments she resumed her place in the coach, and set off from Arthenay at five in the morning, leaving the greater part of her escort to follow as best they might. Reports met her on the way that the King's troops were already in Orleans; but being, as she admits, 'of a rather resolute nature,' she disregarded them all, and arrived before the Porte Bannière, one of the principal gates of the town, before midday. It was, as the messenger had foretold, firmly barricaded, and her demands for admittance met with absolutely no success. She was not even allowed to hold any communication with the authorities, after the first refusal. Mademoiselle continued before the gate for three hours, *m'ennuyant dans mon carrosse*, till she could bear the inaction no longer, and dismounted, to walk along under the walls with the ladies who had accompanied her in the carriage. She could see M. le Marquis d'Alluye, the governor, watching her through the shot-window over the gate; while the townspeople, who lined the ramparts, cried out with joy at sight of her: 'Vive

le Roi, les princes, et point de Mazarin !' In her excitement, she declares, she 'could not help calling back to them to go to the Hôtel de Ville and make the authorities come and open the gates,' though her advisers told her she ought not to have done it. At the next entrance they were equally repulsed. But this strange little forlorn hope was not to be discouraged ; they still pursued their way, and finally reached the place where the walls of the town were met by the river. Then at last their perseverance was rewarded, for the ferrymen and boatmen no sooner recognised their duke's daughter than they came as one man to offer her their services. There was a gate, they said, not far off, opening on to one of the quays, which they would undertake to break open if she gave them leave. 'Something wonderful will happen to me to-day,' said the princess to her ladies ; 'an astrologer foretold it me. I shall have that gate opened, or take the town by assault.' 'I accepted the offer gladly,' she continues, 'and said all the pleasant things to these boatmen that I could think of.' The tide was low in the river, and a bridge was improvised, consisting of two ferry-boats and a ladder, by which Mademoiselle was to scale the quay. 'One rung of the ladder,' she remembered afterwards, 'was missing, which made it difficult to get up'—more especially, one would imagine, in the stately costume of the period ; 'but none of these things seemed to matter when so much advantage to the party was at stake.' Madame de Bréauté, 'the most chicken-hearted creature in the world,' was crying out against the whole proceeding ; 'and I am not sure,' her mistress unfeelingly relates, 'that the fright she was in did not even make her swear.' Meanwhile the boatmen worked with a will, and without encountering much opposition, as a band of soldiers, who still supported Monsieur's cause, had been gathered together on the inner side of the wall, with M. de Gramont, a *frondeur*, at their head. Mademoiselle stood by, with her little group of attendants, eagerly watching for the signal to advance, and quite as much alive to the humorous side of the occasion as to its real importance. 'When I saw,' she says, 'that they had taken two planks out of the middle of the door, and that there was no other way of opening it, as two great iron bars had been fastened across, Gramont signed to me from inside to come forward. It was so muddy that one of my footmen lifted me to the gate, and pushed me through the hole, and no sooner was my head inside than the drums struck up ; I gave my hand to the captain, and said : "You will be glad to be able to say that it was you who brought me in."

The shouts of "Vive le Roi, les princes, et point de Mazarin!" were redoubled. Two men put me in a wooden chair they had brought, and I was so glad to be where I was that I do not know whether I sat on the seat or on one of the arms; everyone was kissing my hands, and I could do nothing but laugh to think of the position I was in.'

In this triumphal state, covered with mud, and in fits of laughter, with the drums beating before her, Mademoiselle was borne through the town to the council-house, where the governor and other officials, not a little embarrassed by the unexpected turn of affairs, could only make the best of it, by receiving her with all due honours. 'Persons of my rank,' she observes in her favourite phrase, 'must be in the habit of giving orders wherever they may find themselves'; therefore, with a dignity not the least impaired by her irregular entrance, the 'new Maid of Orleans,' as she was nicknamed, unhesitatingly assumed the direction of affairs. When these transactions had been accomplished, it was already late in the evening; but, tired as she was, the victorious commander could not forego the satisfaction of announcing her success with her own hand, and she sat writing despatches to Monsieur, and to the Duc de Beaufort, till three in the morning. Gaston's reply was one of the few civil letters he ever addressed to her; 'My daughter,' he wrote, 'you have saved Orleans for me and secured Paris; it is the cause of national rejoicings, and everyone declares that your conduct was worthy of the granddaughter of Henri IV.' At the same time he sent congratulations to Mesdames de Fiesque and de Frontenac, inscribed, 'A mesdames les comtesses, maréchales de camp dans l'armée de ma fille contre le Mazarin.'

Mademoiselle remained for about a month in Orleans, which was converted by her presence into one of the most anti-royalist strongholds in France. The citizens adored her, and would open the gates to none but Monsieur's followers, and the town was used as headquarters by Beaufort's army during the greater part of her stay. The various difficulties which she encountered; her embarrassment before her first council of war, when the task of explaining Monsieur's instructions to the assembled officers devolved upon her; and her dismay, tempered by amusement, at the furious quarrel between the two generals, the Dukes of Beaufort and Nemours, who actually struck each other in her presence, and wept when she succeeded in reconciling them:—these and many other details are given in her memoirs at too

great length for quotation. When the time came for her return to Paris, she was received in the different towns along the road with full military honours, and enjoyed them to the utmost. Condé himself, 'M. le Prince' as he was called by his contemporaries, came to meet her, with a distinguished company, and escorted her on the last stage of the journey, 'and the people in the streets,' she wrote after her entry into the capital, 'ran after me as if they had never seen me before, so that I was quite ashamed.'

In short, she had acquired a reputation for valour and military skill, which was soon to be much more severely tested than in the assault 'pour rire' on Orleans. The summer of the same year (1652) found the Queen-mother and the young King at Rueil; Mademoiselle and her father, strong in the support of the masses, lived secure in Paris; and two of the most distinguished of French generals represented the Queen and the Princes in skirmishes outside the walls. Matters had been fairly quiet within the town for some months when suddenly what had been little more than a pretence of warfare blazed out into stern reality. On the morning of July 2, as early as six o'clock, Mademoiselle, who occupied a suite of apartments at the Tuileries, was roused by the arrival of a messenger, sent by 'M. le Prince' to inform her that he had been attacked, near Montmartre, by a very superior force under Turenne; that the Porte St.-Denis had already been closed; and that, unless a retreat could be kept open for him into the city, the army of the Fronde was lost. This appeal for help was addressed in the first place to Monsieur, who, on receiving it, pleaded illness and declined to take any steps whatever; Condé, foreseeing this contingency, had directed that the message should also be delivered to Mademoiselle, and she was now implored to use what influence she could with her father before it was too late. Gaston d'Orléans had often given his daughter cause to blush for him, but her sense of filial duty was never more hardly tried than on this occasion. To her loyal, if ungoverned, nature it was utterly incomprehensible that he should be willing to sacrifice his adherents to his personal jealousy of Condé and to the fear of being implicated in an unsuccessful revolt. She entreated him with tears to make the necessary efforts, if not for the sake of their cause, at least for that of their personal friends, who were with the army; 'brave and honest men,' she says, 'who all in turns seemed to come before my mind'; and, when all she could say on that score proved

unavailing, she begged him, for very shame, to keep his room and to act the part of an invalid a little more convincingly. 'Il n'en fit rien'; neither prayers nor threats would move him, and after an hour's conversation, during which time, as Mademoiselle observes, 'all our friends might have been killed, to say nothing of M. le Prince,' MM. de Rohan and de Chavigny, Gaston's principal counsellors, appeared on the scene. They suggested, as before, that there was no one so well fitted as Mademoiselle to take the place which should have been filled by Monsieur; possibly they hinted that she could represent, yet not commit him. In any case their united arguments succeeded in obtaining permission for her to act, together with a written document, referring 'les Messieurs de ville' to the princess, his daughter, for their instructions. The traditional gaiety of the Fronde was quite eclipsed, and Mademoiselle, in the greatest anxiety, hastened to the Hôtel de Ville to meet the Governor, Michel de l'Hôpital, and the other municipal authorities. She was not too well received. Her demands were, firstly, that they should call the inhabitants of Paris to arms, and send 2,000 men to Condé's assistance; and secondly, that they should give her a troop of 400 soldiers to post where she liked. The great request she kept to the last, which was that they should let the Princes' army through their gates and keep out the King's. There was no reason to hesitate, she assured them, with more conviction than accuracy. If Condé were defeated, the town would fall into the hands of Mazarin, who knew himself to be hated by the citizens, and would take revenge accordingly; thus the enemies of Monsieur would be found to be the worst enemies of Paris. 'That may be,' replied the President de l'Hôpital, 'but you, Mademoiselle, are aware that, but for the existence of your army, there would have been no question of fighting at all.' Madame de Nemours, the sister of Beaufort, was one of the few ladies present and would have disputed the question, had not Mademoiselle interfered. 'Gentlemen,' she said, addressing the council, 'remember that, while you are discussing this matter, the life of M. le Prince is in danger in your faubourgs. Think of the disgrace that would come upon you if he fell by your fault. If you can send him help, then do it quickly.' Still they would give no consent without some further debate, for which purpose they withdrew into another room, while the poor princess, who felt that everything now depended upon her, stood at the window that opened into the Chapel of the St.-Esprit, reciting her prayers.

At length, to her unspeakable thankfulness, a message came that all her conditions were agreed to. She was almost at her wits' end, she tells us, and was meditating an appeal to the people of Paris, when the news arrived; needless to add, she lost no time in acting upon it.

The fight had now continued for several hours. Condé, still resisting fiercely—his enemies said 'like a demon'—had been driven back into the narrow streets of the faubourg outside the Porte St.-Antoine. It was at this moment that Mademoiselle, by causing the great gate to open and admit his hard-pressed troops, changed the fortune of the day. As she made her way through the city, to assure herself that her directions had been carried out, the whole force came pouring in. 'At every step,' she describes, 'we saw wounded men, some on foot, some riding, some carried on ladders and planks; and dead bodies in litters. In the Rue de la Tixanderie we met the most horrible sight that can be imagined: M. de la Rochefoucauld with a musket shot between his eyes; his son was leading him.' Others of her friends and acquaintances she met in still worse case, so that, for all her warlike reputation, she had no rest that night, '*j'eus tous ces pauvres morts dans la tête.*' But she was still the 'grand-daughter of Henri IV.,' and, fired with the idea of a still more audacious measure, she pushed on for the Bastille itself, where, with the artillery of the fortress at her command, she was prepared to use it to ensure the safety of her friends. One of the officials, being informed of her intention, came forward to offer his house in the Rue St.-Antoine, as a half-way lodging, from which she might send her orders either to the Bastille or to the gates. Mademoiselle thankfully accepted, glad to escape, even for a moment, from the horrors outside; though the room where she waited looked nowhere but into the street. As she sat there she relates how Condé, who passed among those who knew him for a monster of heartlessness, came suddenly into the house, straight out of the fight; '*dans un état pitoyable,*' bloodstained, covered with dust, his cuirass '*tout criblé de coups,*' a sword in his hand and the sheath lost. He made some brief apology, dropped into a chair, and burst into tears, saying that all his friends were killed. 'Yet they tell you,' she adds, 'that he cares for nothing and no one.' After a few moments he collected himself and went out again, leaving his already staunch ally better disposed towards him than she had ever been before.

The hours which followed were the turning-point in the

career of 'la grande Mademoiselle.' She was that day beyond question the most influential person in Paris, and it was her loyalty to her friends which proved her own undoing. When the gates had closed upon Turenne's advance, her boldest design was put into execution: the cannon of the Bastille were turned upon the King's army, in the King's capital, by the order of the King's own cousin, and Turenne was compelled to retire. By this decisive stroke she indisputably and finally disposed of any prospects she may have had of sharing the French throne. 'Mademoiselle has killed her husband,' de Retz is reported to have said on hearing the sound of the cannon. And so she had; for though 'ma cousine' was afterwards received at Court, Louis never forgave her; his ideas on the subject of the House of Bourbon were too like her own. It was asserted in some quarters that Mademoiselle denied that the order actually proceeded from her. But in her own memoirs the version of the story which all France accepted is confirmed, and even dwelt on with pride. 'When I thought that evening, and when I think even now, how that army was saved through me, I own it caused me great pleasure and at the same time great astonishment to reflect that I had made the cannon heard in Paris, and passed in the red banners with St. Andrew's Cross.' She lived to see the Fronde dispersed; and her subsequent career came lamentably short of the brilliant future which had been prophesied for her. Yet it is difficult to believe that she ever really regretted her hour of triumph, or repented the help which she so valiantly gave to the soldiers, who cried that day, when they heard she was coming to open the gates: 'Faisons merveille! Mademoiselle est à la porte!'

EVELINE C. GODLEY.

An Ambassador.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'CONCERNING TEDDY.'

I.

THE holidays were long, the weather hot; Michael felt proportionately bored and out of sorts. Few of us, until we are deprived of them, estimate our privileges at their proper value; and this regrettable fact—since knowledge springs from experience—became, during the companionless summer days, painfully clear and evident to Michael. Teddy, as a play-fellow, might be somewhat autocratic and overbearing, Aubrey erred rather on the sober side, and Caroline displayed upon occasion a fondness for reading which Michael considered inconvenient and disappointing. Still, their absence revealed hitherto unsuspected virtues, while the fact that both father and Uncle Charlie were shooting in Scotland left the household under Miss Spalding's sole guidance and control.

Now Michael detested Miss Spalding, and he found the society of the nursery children so stale and unprofitable that, before lesson-days came round again, he had reached his wits' end to discover either occupation or amusement. It was at this juncture that Fate intervened in his behalf, sending to him a charming comrade in the shape of Farmer Backhouse's pretty daughter Susan. Later, when results and consequences were totted up, Miss Spalding let fall various remarks upon 'idle hands,' and the Personage who is supposed to find employment for the same: however, this being merely an opinion on the subject in no way interfered with Susan's conviction that here she beheld the very finger of Providence itself, or with Michael's fixed belief in the interposition of his beloved fairies.

Great events grow out of small happenings; the beginning of Michael's friendship with Susan came about in a perfectly commonplace manner. Feeling more than usually tired, both of his own

society and that of nurse and the children, he sauntered out one sultry afternoon and dawdled through the lanes towards Backhouse's, intent only upon killing time as pleasantly as possible before he need return. Now Backhouse's was the utmost limit to which Miss Spalding allowed Michael unfettered right of way; beyond its low-pitched roof, its outlying red barns, she insisted upon the necessity of an escort, a rule Michael considered peculiarly trying and which—at heart an outlaw—he broke whenever he could conveniently do so. He had intended to break it on this particular afternoon, but found the sun so hot, the way so dusty that, upon reaching Farmer Backhouse's orchard, he turned in at the open gate and threw himself down beneath the shadow of the apple trees. Overhead, the arched boughs laden with ripening fruit, cut patterns across a sky formed, apparently, of bluest velvet; away on the horizon, distant as dreamland, hung a smoke-film marking the site of Mil-lingford, while through the still air the jingle of traffic on distant tram-lines caught the ear—a sound so muffled, so softened in transit as to become only a part of the stillness and repose of the place where Michael lay. He produced an apricot from the pocket of his overall and set his small, white teeth sharply into it. An apricot, to Michael, represented the summit of desire, for, like the fields out there beyond the orchard, it was forbidden fruit—and this particular apricot tasted most luscious and sweet. Moreover, he possessed several others, purloined, like the first, from an unguarded dish in the pantry, therefore he revelled not only in the pleasure of gratified appetite, but in a hope of more gratification immediately to follow.

Like his brother Aubrey, Michael was slow to realise either pain or pleasure; once realised, he took keen and sensitive hold upon either. His sorrows were deep and bottomless, his joys came in the guise of golden enchantment flooding present and future alike in a haze of ecstasy. Now, lying beneath the friendly apple trees, the great hot sun above him and several unbitten apricots hidden away in the folds of his overall, he asked nothing better of life than a quiet space for rest and indolent meditation. Yet, within the next ten minutes, something better was vouchsafed to him. Shifting his gaze from cloudland to the close-set turf beneath, he became aware of a shadow falling athwart the sunshine, a shadow followed by the most charming substance Michael had ever beheld. He lay still, speechless with admiration, staring through half-shut lids, till

the apparition, in a pause of astonishment, dropped to her knees beside him.

'Well, little boy,' she cried, 'whatever are you doing here in father's orchard? Upon my word, you make yourself at home!'

The fair face with its blue eyes, the colour of something Michael vaguely remembered and delighted in, leant above his own; a tendril of yellow hair, lifted by the wandering breeze, swept his forehead. Her voice, though she spoke with more than a touch of the Millingford dialect, sounded softly in his ears and, still wordless, he continued to stare, while his mind followed that haunting suggestion of colour, elusive yet recoverable. The girl rose from her kneeling position and sat down upon the grass beside him.

'I don't know what call you've got to be here,' she said; 'p'raps father gave you leave to come? You can't——' She measured him with a look, 'You can't surely be Master Teddy?'

Michael remained silent; the dancing thought was close within his grasp. Ah! he had it now! Her eyes—her eyes reminded him of a sin of his youth, long past (at the least a month ago), yet unforgotten. His glance fell from hers; his lip quivered.

'I'm not Teddy,' he answered, a trifle uncertainly, 'I'm Michael, and Farmer Backhouse told me his own self I might come in here.'

The girl put out a plump hand and patted him on the cheek. 'Why, of course!' she assured him, 'you can come if father said so. And so you're Master Michael? Bless me, how you've grown in these two years I've been away! Don't you remember me, dear? I'm Backhouse's Susan—Backhouse up here to the farm.'

But Michael's thoughts had flown on wings of memory to that dear, lost dolly of whom, indirectly, the azure eyes of his new acquaintance so poignantly reminded him. He stifled a choking sob and turned his head aside. Susan leaned over him remorsefully. 'Don't cry,' she implored him. 'I never meant to be short with you, that I didn't. You can stop here all day and welcome if you like. I'm only too glad to see you, honey.'

Michael, with an effort, stayed the tide of his emotion. It might be very well at home, in the bosom of one's family, to accept tears and regret as a portion, but out here, in the wide world, he was man enough to understand that courtesy and self-respect alike demanded a calm, if not a smiling, countenance.

Besides, the afternoon was fine, the girl kind and beautiful; and grief, as he well knew, keeps perfectly until to-morrow. Therefore he checked his tears and entered into an explanation.

'It was Weezer,' he said, 'She was my dolly, and I loved her, and she's dead. I burnded her up—but Caroline and the old fairy both think I'll see her again. Somehow you 'minded me of her.'

Susan drew a little nearer to him upon the grass. 'Did I, lovey?' she said with interest; 'I wonder how that could be?'

Michael considered. Though he had captured the flitting memory, he hardly knew by what paths of thought he had attained to it. He regarded his companion gravely for a moment; then he shook his head. 'I don't quite know,' he admitted presently 'but you did. It's gone now. Besides, Weezer is dead; she's all burnded away, so I won't think about her again until to-morrow.'

He sat up and, in his turn, crept a little closer to the girl beside him. 'Who are you?' he demanded. 'Are you really Susan, what Aubrey and Teddy used to know? I thought you'd gone away to service, like the soldiers do, and that p'raps you'd be killed and not come back here any more.'

Susan looked a trifle uncomprehending. 'Oh, no!' she said; 'it was hardish work, and I hated London, but it's not so bad as all that, Master Michael. I came home a week or two since, and father he says he can't spare me any more, so here I shall stop, at any rate for the present.'

She paused, plucking at the long grasses in the hedge behind her. Michael laid a chubby fist upon her lap. 'Then can I come and play with you?' he asked confidently. 'The boys are away, and Caroline's gone home, and the children *is* so dull.'

He pulled another apricot from his pocket and offered it to her. 'When you've eaten it there's the apples,' he said, in a tone of instruction; 'You're taller than me; you could pick some, and p'raps we might play ball with them?'

Susan laughed and sprang from her place upon the grass. Stretching a pink sleeved arm above her head, she dragged at a twisted apple-bough and began to strip from it the reddening fruit. Michael watched her absorbedly. Not only would these round, smooth apples serve as playthings but, on his homeward way, some of them could be conveniently disposed of as soon as the apricots should have been demolished. Judge then of his disappointment when suddenly, for no apparent reason, the girl

loosed her hold, stepped back a few paces, and froze into an attitude of keen attention. The bough swung to its old position, a position hopelessly beyond the grasp of valiant endeavour, while Michael, scrambling to his feet, was about to remonstrate loudly when, from the lane behind him, floated the sound of a long clear whistle—just four or five high notes with a fall at the end of the cadence. Susan raised her head, pursed her red lips, and answered by another call, equally melodious. Then she turned to Michael and dropped again upon her knees beside him.

‘See here,’ she said coaxingly, ‘I want you to go right home now, honey boy. To-morrow, if you’ll come up here, there’ll be a lot of apples ready and we can play ball together just as long as you please. To-day I’d rather be alone. Don’t cry,’ she added hastily, reading in Michael’s countenance unmistakable signs of a great dismay. ‘Don’t cry, there’s a dear. I’ll have pears as well as apples. Yes,’ she nodded her pretty head, ‘and maybe a ripe nectarine or two. Now kiss me, and run along as I tell you.’

Michael hesitated. The bribe was a big bribe, but he sorely wanted to remain; besides, that whistle from the distance filled him with a vague curiosity. He possessed, however, more than a touch of the innate dignity which distinguishes some children from their earliest days, and where he was not wanted he certainly would not remain. Therefore, in response to Susan’s wooing arms, he nestled his cheek against hers during a brief moment; then, with a lingering glance at his paradise and the Eve who stayed, expectant, beneath the apple trees, he trotted through the open gate and turned his face homeward once again. Half-way down the lane he encountered Tim Hooligan, the good-looking young Irish constable who had lately taken up his duties in the neighbourhood. Michael saluted and passed on. For him the meeting held little or no significance: his brother Teddy, with intelligence sharpened by experience in a world of intrigue and duplicity, would have penetrated further into the secret of Susan’s anxiety for his departure.

The next few days dawned so sultry that Miss Spalding issued peremptory orders forbidding Michael an exodus from the garden. He resented the restriction though, perforce, yielding to it, and thus it came about that he did not revisit the farm until nearly a week had slipped by. Then, after running all the way to the orchard gate, he raced through it so impetuously as almost to

stumble over the prostrate figure of his friend Susan. She lay prone upon the grass, her sunny hair hidden beneath a crumpled sun-bonnet, her face, as she lifted it to Michael's, flushed and stained with tears. He contemplated her during a pause of uncertainty and dismay; then in a glow of commiseration he threw his arms round her neck and kissed her over and over again.

'Poor Susan,' he said, 'poor Susan, don't cry! The fairies are sure to comfort you by-and-by.'

He found himself unable to conceive of any adequate cause for the tears of a grown-up person; they seemed indeed most terrible and, though he strove to utter them, no further words of consolation entered his bewildered mind. He remained silent, patting Susan's head with a small, hot hand, and trying to recall in what manner, on the last scrape but one in which he had embroiled himself, Caroline had contrived to administer a modicum of consolation.

Presently Susan, feeling acutely the need for human sympathy, pushed back her sun-bonnet and gathered Michael within her arms. 'I sha'n't never see him again,' she said, a sob in her breath; 'father's forbidden it—he says he's nothing but a wild Irishman and no good for a Millingford lass to marry. And what Dad says he sticks to. So Tim Hooligan can't come here no more, nor I be off to meet him in the lanes. Oh! father keeps an eye on what I'm doing. Dear, oh! dear, and all because of that silly Home Rule Tim doesn't hold with not a little bit.'

She rocked herself and Michael to and fro upon the grass. 'If it hadn't been for your uncle, Master Michael, who's filled father up with all these notions, Tim and me we might have been so happy together. Oh! why can't the gentry let us poor folk be? What does Mr. Charles want with Dad, a'talking politics?'

Here the sob found vent, and Michael, becoming in a vague confusion aware that, somehow or other, Uncle Charlie was to blame for Susan's misfortunes, felt it incumbent upon him, as the only available representative of the family, to set the matter right so far as in him lay. He remembered how, only a few months ago, Jane the housemaid had fretted after an undergardener whom his (Michael's) father had dismissed. He had heard nurse declare to Miss Spalding that the gardener's absence, and his absence alone, could be responsible for Jane's swollen eyelids and fits of aberration. Here again Michael encountered swollen lids, lids—disfiguring those eyes only a short time ago so

full of sparkle and of light. Certainly Susan must be very unhappy, otherwise she would not rock thus desolately upon the ground ; she would get up and produce the promised apples, pears, and nectarine. Michael looked disconsolately about the orchard. He was very hot ; Susan clasped him with a fervour both close and uncomfortable, yet he continued to pat her intermittently upon the head, the while he racked his brains to comprehend the reason of her sorrow.

‘If I could only write to him,’ she sighed, after an interval, ‘but father, he won’t let me out to the post.’

Suddenly she held Michael at arm’s length away from her.

‘See here, honey,’ she uttered breathlessly, ‘you know Tim, my Tim, Tim Hooligan ? You meet him sometimes round about here and outside the park gate, don’t you ?’

Michael nodded ; the young policeman was a particular friend of his.

‘You’re *sure* you meet him hereabouts ?’ insisted Susan strenuously.

Again Michael nodded. ‘I meets him *werry* often,’ he assured her, ‘mostly in the lanes ’tween here and our home. But why for, Susan ?’

Susan glanced round the sunlit spaces of the orchard. Not a soul was in sight ; not a sound, save the friendly, familiar murmur of farmyard and of homestead, broke the warm silence. ‘Why for,’ she repeated eagerly, ‘why for, Master Michael ? If you would take him a letter from me I would—I would——’

She paused, at a loss for words wherewith to express the magnitude of her gratitude and recognition. ‘I’d just do *anything* for you, that I would !’ she concluded vigorously.

Michael wriggled a little, trying to free himself from her clutch. He considered the afternoon too hot for prolonged caresses. ‘Course I’ll give Tim the letter, Susan,’ he remarked soothingly, ‘and I don’t want nothing but to come here and have you play with me sometimes. It’s awful dull at home now ev’ry-body’s away.’

His glance wandered past her to where, in the rick-yard beyond the orchard, protruded the top of a ladder leaning against one of the tallest haystacks, ‘Let’s go and climb up there,’ he said, pointing with a stumpy, sun-browned finger. ‘Let’s climb up there and sit in the hay. Our stacks aren’t ready yet. Do come.’

Susan hesitated. ‘But do you quite understand ?’ she

queried anxiously. 'The letter must be given to Tim and to nobody else at all, and you mustn't say one word about it, not on no account whatever.'

'I won't,' declared Michael stoutly, 'I promises, Susan, dear. Now get the pears an' apples an' things, and come along.'

They hurried together to the rick-yard. Even here Michael found a longer delay inevitable. Susan announced that she must go into the house in order to fetch the promised fruit, also to consider and to indite her letter. 'But I won't be long,' she assured him, 'You can wait below, all in the nice soft hay. Only don't go up there till I come again, will you, lovey?'

Michael sat down at the foot of the ladder. A thick litter of hay spread around him; above his head rose the great rick, upon the summit of which he hoped soon to disport himself. He looked up at it contentedly. 'I'll wait,' he said. 'Our stacks aren't so nice as yours. They've all got slopey roofs so's you can't get on them; this one is be-utiful. But be quick, Susan.'

With that he curled himself round, and somehow the next thing he became aware of was Susan's voice calling in his ear, Susan's face full of sunshine, and Susan's apron bulging with the promised fruit. He raised his lids sleepily; a fat little russet-brown pear rolled on to his chest and slipped into the hay beside him.

'Come along,' cried his friend, tripping gaily up the ladder, 'but be careful you don't fall; maybe your shoes are slippery with running on the grass.'

Michael ascended with laborious precision, his sturdy brown legs moving cautiously until, gaining confidence, he took the last few rungs precipitately and emerged upon his El Dorado.

The girl, hands held out, awaited his arrival. 'That's right,' she said; 'now we'll have a real good time together, you and I.'

Providence, we are told, helps those who help themselves; therefore Susan might perhaps be pardoned for attributing Michael's speedy encounter with Tim Hooligan to a special arrangement brought about entirely on her behalf. The meeting took place just beyond the bounds of Farmer Backhouse's domain, and Michael who, in a fit of abstraction, had been hurrying on with merely an interchange of the customary salute, picked up suddenly and hastened back upon his track.

'Oh!' he called, 'stop, Tim Hooligan, please do stop. I quite forgot what Susan gived me for you. Oh! do come back.'

The policeman's tall figure was just disappearing round a bend in the lane when Michael's appeal checked him as abruptly as though he had been called to attention. He turned hastily, and the next moment the precious missive was in his hands.

'And what 'ud ye done if ye'd not met me?' he demanded presently of the waiting messenger; 'where'd ye hide the letther at all, till ye come acrost me? For it's not me that 'ud care for the maids at the big House to be finding Susan's love words upon ye—I mane, have ye ever a pocket that nurse she'd not be divin' into?'

The contingency had not occurred either to Susan or to her messenger. Michael, who could not but feel honoured by the secret service into which he was pressed, looked himself up and down with an eye of consideration. He understood, since Susan had urged it upon him, that to Tim Hooligan, and to Tim Hooligan alone, must her letter be delivered, but the problem of how the task could be safely effected had not hitherto presented itself to his mind. He felt considerably puzzled yet, in view of future eventualities, he was anxious not to lose his post as ambassador; besides, he held already a strong affection for his friend the policeman, and a decided liking for pretty, good-natured Susan. Supposing there were other letters to be carried! He would like to carry them, but how—in face of this odd objection to their being read by others—how could he possibly manage it? Michael would have been proud, indeed, that any composition of his should be read to the whole world, but then the writing of a letter was regarded by him as a feat of colossal importance—too great an achievement to be wrought for the benefit of one person only. Tim, however, viewed the matter differently, and Michael regretted that he could suggest no way out of the dilemma. The big policeman and the little boy looked at one another in perplexity, till at last Hooligan brought his hand with a smack on the top of the low wall beside him.

'I know,' he said, 'and bedad 'twas like meself not to think of it before. See, Masther Michael; ye'll bring Susie's letthers just here, and ye'll slip them into this little hole in the wall.'

He showed Michael how, in a cranny between the loose unmortared stones, a sheet of note-paper might safely lie

concealed. 'That's the posth'-office for ye,' he said triumphantly, 'and ye can just pop Susie's letthers to me into the inside of it, and lave 'em there till what toime I can come and fetch 'em away me own self.'

Michael puckered his forehead reflectively. Presently the full significance of Tim's plan dawned upon him. 'And so's I do that, nurse can't find them in my pocket?' he said gleefully. 'I see now; it's like when Caroline played at 'nonymous correspondence, 'bout Teddy's school cricket matches; the letters was always left up in the Chemistry Chamber.'

'That's it,' responded Hooligan, delighted to find so apt a pupil, 'and when I write to Susie I'll just pop the letther in here, and presintly ye'll come by, and look for ut, and take ut out to carry away for her. Oh! there's gran' toimes afore us all, Masther Michael, I assure ye—gran' toimes intoirely. An' now ye'd best be gittin' home, and I must go on me bate, so good-bye to ye. See here a minut'; he dragged from an inner receptacle an old pocket knife, broken as to blade yet available for an article of offence; 'see here, there's me knoife I'll make ye a prisint of; and don't forgit when ye come along here to look ev'ry day into the letther-box.'

With that the man and the boy, gravely saluting one another, passed each on his separate way, the policeman rejoicing at this unexpected way out of Love's difficulty, and Michael deeply imbued with a conviction of his own ultra-importance.

'But I mustn't tell nobody,' he assured himself as he trotted homewards, 'not one single nobody. P'raps,' he loitered for a moment, awed by the magnitude of the idea, 'p'raps it's almost a good thing that I burned up Weezer, else I *must* have whispered it to her!'

He paused, shook his head, and trotted on again.

Michael is not the only one amongst us who, realising a benefit to self from the misfortune of another person, experiences some confusion of mind as to what may, and what may not, be properly considered as a blessing. After all, the question depends entirely upon one's point of view.

II.

The hot, airless days crept by, just such hot days as come to us sometimes at the fag end of a vanishing summer. Father was

at home again; Uncle Charlie might be expected immediately. Michael was glad; in spite of wide-open doors, permitting free egress at all times during the morning and afternoon, in spite of Susan's amiability, he wearied of the long sultry hours, and he longed for the companionship of his brothers and of Caroline. Viewed from a distance even fagging out at cricket appeared attractive; while he would have followed cheerfully at Teddy's heels, regardless alike of the weariness in his own short legs, and of those unforeseen difficulties in which a stroll with his elder brother usually culminated.

Uncle Charlie, always good-natured, often at leisure, would prove a relief in this hot monotony. Michael awaited his return with impatience; meantime the heat and the loneliness brought with them a share of compensation. Miss Spalding remained unusually cross, while nurse grew careless: no one took any particular notice of Michael, and he found himself free to come and go very much as he pleased. In consequence, the love affairs of Tim Hooligan and Susan of Backhouse's progressed at a great pace, assuming ever graver and graver proportions. Love, like fruit, ripens quickly beneath a blaze of sunshine. This late summer transformed the fancy of the young policeman to a deep and lasting attachment, while Susan's heart, instead of her vanity, became involved in the question. Michael, between them, pursued the even tenor of his way, dropped notes into the stone post-office, or retrieved them from its depths, with equal fidelity, ate a larger quantity of pears and nectarines than had ever previously fallen to his share, and enjoyed a romp with Susan or waited for her letters just as she had occasion to demand of him.

On the afternoon of Uncle Charlie's return he was in attendance for a longer time than usual, but, as Susan explained to her lover afterwards, she had a great deal to say, and the saying of it required no little thought and consideration. Besides, the capacities of the post-office were limited, and one has to write carefully in order to compress a great deal of love into a single sheet of note-paper.

Her messenger meanwhile, grown weary of his own society, strolled from orchard to garden: thence, casting about for some amusement to beguile the lagging hour, he wandered into his favourite rick-yard and sat down to explore the contents of his capacious pocket.

It was Michael's habit, in the absence of any person whom he loved, to appropriate some trifle belonging to them, and to carry

it about with him for such time as the real owner remained beyond his ken. Thus he now produced from their hiding-places a stump of lead-pencil forgotten by Aubrey, a couple of bent and battered cigarettes thrown on one side by the careless Teddy, and a minute, very dirty, round pincushion, the property of his much loved Caroline. Next came a crumpled handkerchief, one or two hard green apples, a squashed apricot, and a large and sticky piece of butterscotch. Michael laid these treasures on the ground beside him, glanced at them carelessly, and again dived into the recesses of his pocket. This time he found what he wanted—a little silver match-box, engraved with the monogram 'C.E.D.' and a date. This match-box Michael, wandering by hazard that morning through the bedrooms, had discovered lying upon Uncle Charlie's dressing-table. He had laid hands upon it immediately, reflecting that ere the traveller's return during the evening he, Michael, would be relegated to his bed in the night nursery, and that the shining toy would bridge the gulf until to-morrow morning. As for the cigarettes, they had, it is true, belonged to Teddy, but Teddy had sworn off smoking; he said it was apt to stunt the growth, and he looked upon the practice as a pose unworthy the patronage of a really manly boy. He had therefore cast out temptation from his pocket, and unluckily, though not much remained, there was yet enough to prove a stumbling-block for the feet of a younger brother. Visions of a quiet hour when, with one of these cigarettes between his teeth, he should lounge in some convenient resting-place, even as he had seen Teddy lounging, and watch the blue smoke curl upward from his lips, while, in the midst of it, perchance some fairy should appear with whom he might hold communion—visions such as these had lately grown upon Michael's inner consciousness. Hitherto that vital spark which alone could bring them within his grasp had been lacking. Bryant & May's matches strike only upon the box—so Michael had discovered to his perplexity and disappointment; but to-day—to-day he held the magic clue within his fingers. He stuck a cigarette into his mouth, gripped it firmly with his little white teeth, and after considerable fumbling struck a match upon Uncle Charlie's silver match-box. It was odd—when Teddy performed the same rite it appeared so easy—but now, somehow or other, the cigarette refused to light. Michael threw away one match and struggled with another. This time the result was promising, and the smoker broke into a sudden fit of coughing, during which the second

match, cast aside like the first, flickered and died upon the ground beside him. Five minutes passed tediously; by which time Michael's face had become rather white, his cigarette a trifle shorter, and the match-box, though he shook it and turned it upside down, was empty: by which time also Susan appeared upon the scene, twisting her letter, ready sealed, between her fingers. Michael, with not a moment in which to thrust the smouldering cigarette into his pocket, dropped it into the soft nest of hay behind him, and, rather glad of the interruption, ran forward to meet her. Susan swept up the treasures, spread in a row as Michael had arranged them, and, together with her letter, stowed them away in his pocket. Then she pulled his hat from its usual abiding-place on his shoulders, smoothed down the skirt of his blouse, and kissed him heartily.

'It's most six o'clock, honey,' she told him. 'I'm afraid I've kept you overlong. Run away home now, but don't forget the post-office.'

And Michael, obediently, ran.

Uncle Charlie, striding up the lane in the velvety blackness of a perfect summer night, cannoned sharply against a man who came racing out of the darkness from an opposite direction. In the distance, where the brows of the hill drop between belts of woodland, a misty red glow shimmered upon the horizon. The running man, catching Uncle Charlie by the elbow, muttered incoherent apology.

'But sure, Misther Charles, an' it's yerself,' he panted, 'there's no need for more words at all. Backhouse's ricks is a'fire, and I'm for the Posth-Office to telephone the City Brigade. There's work and to spare; could ye lend us a hand, I wondher?'

Uncle Charlie swung on his heel. 'Go back,' he said; 'I'll send word to Millingford and be after you immediately. Hi! Tim—d'you know how the fire broke out?'

'Faith, an' I do, sor,' cried a voice far up the lane, 'an' it's loike I am to hear more av it before I've done!'

Hooligan was gone. Uncle Charlie, leaving a hasty message for his brother, telephoned to the Millingford Fire Station and sped after him. The local brigade was already at work. The chief officer and his men—blackened with smoke, reeking of burning hay—pushed and hauled the hose hither and thither, played on the flames, cut the smouldering tops and sides out of the ricks, and, after half an hour's desperate fighting, got the fire

somewhat under control. Uncle Charlie found himself toiling next to Hooligan.

'How did the conflagration break out? yer honour says,' he panted, pitching fork-loads of smoking hay on to the sodden ground behind him. 'How did it break out? An' it's meself can truly say that yourself has a dale to do with it. It's aisy to start a flare; it's none so aisy to put an end to it. And that, beggin' yer pardon, is what ye did in the mind—it's not too big a one at that—in the mind of Farmer Backhouse.'

'The mind of Backhouse!' said Uncle Charlie, 'what on earth has his mind to do with his fire?'

'It was politicks, Misther Charles, politicks. Why ever did ye need to prejoodice him against the Oirish? Sure it's not meself houlds wid' Home Rule at all, at all; yet the ould man won't listen to a worrd I say, and Susan——'

Uncle Charlie, spreading the hay with swift, strong sweeps of the fork, uttered a low whistle.

'Susan!' he said. 'By Jove! Tim, I've done you a bad turn, I'm thinking. No matter; I'll set it right again; trust me for that. Though what Home Rule has to do with these blazing ricks I can't imagine—unless—indeed—but no! You're not that sort, Hooligan.'

Hooligan dropped his fork in amazement. 'Is 'ut me?' he began, 'me! that's kept company wid Susie these four weeks and more unbeknown to th' ould man? Is 'ut me——'

But at this moment, with pomp and circumstance, the City Brigade arrived upon the scene. At this moment, also, Michael's father presented himself before Uncle Charlie, offering for inspection the flat of his open hand.

'What is it?' said Uncle Charlie. He dashed the perspiration out of his eyes, and picked from his brother's palm the dinted, battered semblance of a silver match-box.

'Yours, I think,' said Michael's father. 'At any rate it carries your initials. Now, as Backhouse tells me he's pretty certain this fire results from some fool's trick of smoking under one of the stacks——'

'Well, *I'm* not the fool,' said Uncle Charlie hastily. 'I only got home half an hour ago, and I came straight along here.'

His brother smiled. For once in a way Uncle Charlie sympathised with the exasperated sense of inferiority invariably produced by that smile upon the nerves of his schoolboy nephew Teddy.

'What notion have you got in your head?' he snapped impatiently.

'Backhouse swears somebody has been smoking here. This is your match-box. You were not at home.' Michael's father, in spite of scorched hands, torn shirt, and mud-splashed attire, remained imperturbable as ever. 'The question is who can have borrowed it, Charlie? Of course, had this happened during the holidays—— However, Teddy is away. That being so—I wonder!'

'If ye plaze, yer honour,' broke in Hooligan eagerly, 'if ye plaze, yer honour, there's little Masther Michael——' He clapped a sudden hand on his mouth, glanced in dismay from one man to the other and, realising the situation, became instantly cool again, and doubly upon his guard.

Michael's father turned the little box over in his fingers. 'Yes—Master Michael?' he queried smoothly. But nothing more, by bribe or persuasion, would Susie's lover divulge. 'Bedad, I've betrayed the little chap intoirely,' he broke out when presently the older man was called away by the Captain of the Brigade. 'His father's a hard man, beggin' yer pardon, Misther Charles, and he'll give him a whacking for sure to-morrow mornin'! Unless——' he worked furiously amongst the evil-smelling hay during a few minutes; then turned again to Uncle Charlie: 'Unless we out wid the whole truth, Susie and me. We'll have to spake some toime; betther now than later. Well, here goes! I'd sooner be bowled over entoirely than the poor little lad should suffer. Sure never was such an ambassadhör before.'

Now whether the fairies or Providence may be credited with the events following immediately upon the fire at Backhouse's is a matter which Susan and Michael, who agree upon most subjects, have decided to leave undiscussed. Certain it is that Michael, summoned very early next morning to the awful presence of his father in that most solemn apartment, the library, found himself tongue-tied and spell-bound under a cross-examination the like of which he had never endured before. Miss Spalding!—Miss Spalding's methods were the methods of a babe compared with those of his father. Michael admitted, contradicted, hesitated, denied: finally he pulled up—short, resolved to die ten thousand deaths rather than betray his dear comrade Susan and her loved policeman. And death, to him, seemed very near indeed; so near as almost, in his terror, to prove a welcome visitor.

'Now Michael,' said his father, 'understand me once and for all. You admit having borrowed—we will call it borrowed—your uncle's match-box; you admit having smoked (*smoked!* Good Heavens! a child of your age) a cigarette under the hayricks; but, when it comes to confession of what you were doing there you seem unable to reply. Of course there must be a reason. I mean to know it. If not—you understand?—I shall whip you. Should whipping prove useless, there is always Hooligan; I can find out from him if necessary, but I prefer that you should tell me.'

Michael shivered. He was a very little boy and, though possessing much of his brother Aubrey's quiet obstinacy, he knew little of the vigour and fearlessness which enabled Teddy, while respecting their father, occasionally to defy him. Michael defied nobody. He asked only to go his own way in peace and quiet, yet here a very thunderbolt had fallen into his restful life. He must either explain—explain his rôle of ambassador—or take a whipping; the first in his short existence, therefore unutterably terrible. He shivered. His fingers twisted in the front of his overall. To confess would be mean—too well had Teddy taught him that lesson; and the meaner because he dimly understood his Uncle Charlie's honour, as well as that of Tim and Susan, was, somehow or other, here involved. It was Uncle Charlie's fault, so Susan had told him. Confused and helpless he glanced at his father, then away through the open window to the sunbaked lawn without. He clenched his little fist desperately. No, no—he would not tell.

'Michael,' said his father. And Michael sobbed and quivered. There was a pause.

'Michael,' said his father again, 'I give you five minutes to consider! At the end of that time, if you do not speak I shall punish you.'

He laid his watch upon the table and turned aside to other things. Michael, wide-eyed with horror, watched the tiny second-hand click round and round. Oh! who would help him; why did no good fairy come to his assistance? Surely, if ever a miracle was needed, now—— He would tell. He *must* tell. He could never, never bear to be whipped—here, alone, in this horrible dark library, and by his stern-eyed father. He would certainly be obliged to tell. The minutes ticked away. Big tears rolled down Michael's cheeks; he opened his lips to speak, but, with a remembrance of Teddy's discipline, shut them again

more resolutely than before. No! Nothing should make a 'sneak' of him. He forced back his sobs and stood there, silent and resolute.

'How like Teddy,' thought his father. But Michael was not in the least like Teddy. What Teddy did light-heartedly and with small endeavour Michael might accomplish indeed, but in a very martyrdom of body and spirit. It is unfortunate that parents do not always understand these nice distinctions.

The minutes ticked away.

And then, of a sudden, the miracle occurred. For Uncle Charlie's voice was heard in the corridor, calling upon his brother in accents not to be denied, while a charming face, flushed and tearful, appeared at the open window. Michael stared before him. The sob in his heart climbed upwards to his throat and, in a moment, as she stretched through the wide, low casement, his arms were strained convulsively round Susan's neck.

'There, there, honey,' she whispered soothingly, 'Mr. Charles, he knows everything; and he's put it straight with father; and me and Tim's to be married as soon as ever we please.' She rocked him to and fro upon her breast. 'Don't cry, Master Michael, don't cry,' she whispered, 'Mr. Charles has overpersuaded Father, and all's well that end's well. Only we never thought the Master would punish you so soon. Why, you can't have had your breakfast yet, poor lamb.'

Michael's father took up his watch and put it away into his pocket. He listened quietly to all Uncle Charlie had to tell him; then he crossed the room and laid his hand on his little son's shoulder.

'All right, laddie,' he said. 'You did well to hold your tongue; but mind, no more smoking, or you'll taste that whipping yet. As for you, Susan, I hope next time you'll choose another Cupid's messenger.'

Susan looked at him across the top of Michael's curly head. 'There won't be no next time, sir,' she said. 'If I get Tim Hooligan I get all the world holds for me in the way of men.'

Michael struggled out of her arms. 'Yes, and it's the fairies gived him to you. I said they'd comfort you. My Weezer is all burned up, but I know the fairies will let me see her again some day. Won't they, Fadey?'

Michael's father looked at him a moment, a strange expression in his eyes. 'I don't know my boy,' he said. 'Perhaps you may be right; I hope you are.' And then, to his own and to everybody else's astonishment, he bent down and kissed his little son tenderly.

MABEL MURRAY HICKSON.

A Friend of Nelson.

BY HORACE G. HUTCHINSON.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE Prince bettered all my expectations by desiring that I should be admitted to his presence forthwith. It appeared that he had lingered long over breakfast that morning, for on the table were still the remains of that meal, which he had shared with Lord Barrymore, his constant crony, and, to complete the party, with none other than my particular friend, M. de Marigny. The Prince and Lord Barrymore regarded me as I entered with looks in which I fancied that I detected a marked coldness, but De Marigny's face wore its usual smile of genial affability.

'Be seated, sir,' the Prince said, when I had made my bow. 'Before we proceed to the business on which, I make no doubt, you are come, it may interest you to hear that I have just received an express from London with news that on the 22nd ultimo Sir John Calder engaged the French fleet with some success, but failed to keep in touch with them, and they are escaped into Vigo Bay.'

'It is much to be regretted, sir, that he should have let them escape him,' I observed.

'It is much to be regretted,' the Prince agreed; then added, with an ironical accent, 'It is always to be regretted when naval officers fail at all in their duty.'

I felt called upon to make no reply to this remark, at which a faint smile crossed Lord Barrymore's face, and De Marigny's grew even more genial than before.

'It is sometimes still more to be regretted, sir, when naval officers exceed their duty.'

'Quite so, sir,' I replied, rather at a loss to perceive his meaning.

'I presume that you requested an audience of me for some particular purpose,' the Prince said rather brusquely, as if annoyed by my lack of comprehension.

'That is so, sir,' I said; 'but——' I paused and glanced at his two companions.

'Oh, you may speak freely before these gentlemen,' he said, in answer to my look. 'Indeed, it is far better so. You are come, I make no doubt, to ask the reason that, after engaging my word with a certain lady who has an interest in you that is perhaps not unnatural, if a little romantic, seeing that, after running down the ship on which she was a passenger, your men rescued her from the sea—after engaging my word with this lady to do my best for you with the Lords of the Admiralty, I am compelled to withdraw that promise and to confess myself indisposed to aid you further. That, I presume, is the position.'

I bowed in assent to his words, spoken in a tone that augured no good to me.

'That being so, sir, you are come at the most appropriate moment. This is a question of man to man. Monsieur de Marigny, who by a happy chance happens to be present, has given me an account of the manner in which you kidnapped him on his way to London, and gave him over to the custody of a gang of smugglers, who detained him prisoner, apparently at your pleasure. It does not appear the most hospitable treatment possible of a man who was flying from the misrule of his own unhappy land, at the first moment of his coming to our country. May we be informed what you have to say by way of comment or justification of such an outrage?'

'M. de Marigny has not informed your Royal Highness,' I asked, 'under what circumstances, with what motive, I took the liberty of interrupting his journey?'

I turned towards him as I spoke, only to find the same pleasant, guileless smile on his blonde face.

'He has not informed us, sir. He has, indeed, confessed himself at a total loss to understand such extraordinary conduct. I may even add that had it not been for Monsieur de Marigny's earnestly expressed wish, I should have felt compelled to make a report of the circumstances to the proper authorities. But we wait your explanation.'

I was completely nonplussed. The explanation would have been easy enough to give, but, in the first place, would it be believed? I felt that it would wear no air of probability. The

only witness that I could produce—and his production would be difficult, and would lead him, who had done me such yeoman's service, under the observation of the law, which he had his special reasons to dislike—was a smuggler, a criminal, a man who lived, so to speak, with the noose about his neck. True, the Prince knew him, as I had discovered, to my immense surprise, on White Hawk Down, but, knowing him for what he was, would his word be likely to carry weight? It was more than doubtful. Moreover, there was a more imperative reason that forbade my making the required explanation: I had, in all but the letter, given my promise to Lord Barham that no word about the despatches arriving with broken seal should pass my lips.

'You do not answer, sir,' said the Prince, as I stood silent.

'No, your Royal Highness,' I said at length; 'I regret to say that I can give no explanation of my motive.'

'Then I, sir, regret to say that I have to infer the only motive that seems plausible.'

'I am afraid, sir,' I said, 'that I do not understand.'

'I will explain,' said the Prince, with ironical courtesy. 'You had the misfortune to run your ship aground, under circumstances known to your own crew, and to only two English-speaking disinterested spectators, one of them being a lady. The other—the only person whose evidence might conceivably have been inconvenient to you at the court-martial—you took measures, measures violent and illegal, to detain under restraint until the finding of the court was pronounced. Does that seem to you, sir, a plausible explanation of the motive?'

For a moment I stood dumfounded; and for that moment of profound stupefaction I have every reason for the deepest gratitude, for had I spoken it is likely that I should have forgotten utterly in whose presence I stood. As it was, my ideas gathered themselves slowly. Gradually the completeness of the snare in which I had been taken by the machinations of the villain, who ceased not to smile on me with his handsome, hateful face, became apparent to me. I had no words to say in my defence or my excuse. Like one beaten and ashamed I rose from my seat, bowed in silence to the Prince, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

My thoughts as I left the Prince's presence were suicidal. I was not animated by any of the insane impulse of the suicide to destroy my life in my despair, but I was prepared to commit the suicide of my professional being. I had striven, according to lights that I had never supposed very brilliant, to do my duty in my career as a seaman. I had failed, with no little ignominy, and I was filled with a resolve to forsake the Navy and live out my life as a small country gentleman with my dear mother and sister in the confines of Buckhurst Park, shaking for ever from my shoes the dust of that Brighton on which I had printed such feeble, ineffective footsteps. But one visit of any importance remained for me to pay before that last ceremony should be performed. I could not, in common courtesy, depart without taking my leave of the Comtesse d'Estourville, and imploring her forgiveness for the shocking rudeness with which I had required the many acts of friendliness that she had performed on my behalf.

After a turn or two by myself along the Steyne I succeeded in calming myself from the perturbation of my ideas, and resolved, during the few hours I had to remain in the town, to show a bold front to all my enemies and detractors, and purposely sought out the busiest and gayest of the throng, wearing a forced smile upon my face. Amongst the rest I soon found the Vicomtesse d'Arcy, who at once beckoned me to her and said very kindly:

'Eh, my poor boy, I told ye, did I not, of the Psalmist's words, that you should put no trust in princes? Ah, but I am sorry for ye. Hortense told me last night that the Prince would no more stand your friend.'

'God bless you, madame, for your kindness to me!' I said fervently, for in the dark days the first words of sympathy are very precious to a man. 'Did she, did Madame d'Estourville, tell you the reason of the Prince's sudden change of disposition?'

'No, no. She did not tell me, for the reason that she herself did not know it, nor would the Prince himself tell her when she pressed him for his reasons.'

'There is one great kindness you could do for me, Madame d'Arcy,' I said. 'It is that you should arrange for me just once, before I leave Brighton, a chance of meeting Madame d'Estourville, that I may beg her pardon for my rudeness to her—I was

for the moment beside myself—on the last occasion of my seeing her.'

'Eh, but that's easy done, my poor boy,' she replied. 'This very afternoon Hortense comes to drive with me. If you should be there—eh?—by a chance—like? Does that suit you now?'

I thanked the good lady from my heart, and some quarter of an hour before the time appointed for their drive I was at the Lady Anne Murray's house, where the servant told me that I was expected. Madame d'Arcy, for whom I asked, was for the moment at her toilette (refreshing, as I might venture to conjecture, her tints of cheek and eyebrow, or, more likely, with kindlier thought of my own wish to be alone with Madame d'Estourville), but would I await her in the withdrawing room? The minutes were leaden while I waited, but my impatience was at length rewarded. When next the door opened it was to usher in not the old Vicomtesse, with her rouged cheeks, her white hair and her air of the old 'Marquise,' but Hortense d'Estourville, under a wide gipsy hat that sat quaintly, and yet with amazing grace, on her small, erectly carried head. 'Ah,' she exclaimed, as she saw me rising to meet her. And it was with none of the anger that I had every reason to expect depicted on her face, but with a look that I could swear to be one of pleasure, that she came to me and shook my hand.

'What!' I said, 'will you really, after the way I behaved to you?' for I could hardly dare believe that I might take that proffered hand.

'Why, you silly man,' she said, laughing, 'you are human, are you not? You have a right to be angry, a little, sometimes, I should think, and with the people you ought not to be angry with. I do not want you to be too logical. I saw that you turned again the instant I had gone away, and I was sorry that I could not come back, so you might beg pardon then and there, and thus set your mind at ease.'

Now, was not this a wonderful woman? I at least thought so. I had fancied, in my folly and my ignorance, that she, because she was so proud, would be vexed with me, her pride wounded; but now I seemed to see more clearly how that, because of her very pride, she could not be hurt by such a trifling thing as this, by a trick of bad manners, from me, whom she knew to love her so. For know it she did, I am very sure, and I do not think she would deny it. And in this again she showed her pride, that she did not want me now to be down on my knees imploring her forgiveness for a rudeness that she knew to be unintentional, and the act of a

passing mad moment, but gave me the forgiveness of her free will unasked. Another woman, I think, would like to see a man suing at her feet: it would please her. She was a woman whom such things did not please, she being far above the cajoleries of her sex. I speak of her as I thought, and think.

‘Then you will forgive me?’ I said, as I held her hand.

‘No,’ she said, ‘I do not forgive you. I understand you, that is all. I understood you—your feelings—at the moment, exactly. That being so, there was nothing to forgive.’

I felt more humble before a woman who could speak like this than I should have felt under the weight of the most condescending forgiveness.

‘I have been to see the Prince,’ I said, finding no more to say of my penitence.

‘Ah, that was right—that was the honest, brave thing. And he told you——’

‘What you told me, precisely. He will do no more for me.’

‘And he would not tell you the reason.’

‘Yes, he told me the reason.’

‘He did? What was it? Oh, I am so curious to hear. It was, of course, Henri.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘it was Henri.’

She flushed, as I had never seen her flush, in a blaze of wrath.

‘But how did he? What had he said?’

Then I told her all his villainy, and she sate still, nodding now and then, as if checking off the points to be scored against him. When I had finished she replied, ‘I said to you once, my friend, that I hoped the time would never come when we should have to be friends indeed to each other. That time has come now. We have a pact to make together.’

She was speaking very seriously, very quietly, without a trace of excitement. She rose as she ceased speaking, and rang the bell for a servant, then scribbled some few lines on a scrap of paper. When the man came she begged him have the note carried to Madame d’Arcy. ‘I have written a line,’ she explained, as soon as the door closed behind him, ‘to beg Madame d’Arcy spare me a quarter of an hour, or else drive without me. I have much that I have to say to you, my friend. You are about to learn to-day the mystery of the Fair Enigma.’

Now all this may sound most favourable to the desire that lay nearest to my heart, of making this queen of women my wife; yet at the moment her tone in speaking was so matter of fact, so

business-like, indeed, that nothing could be more remote from it than any idea of love-making, and it had the effect of banishing effectually, for the time being, all such ideas from my thoughts. It was a business transaction that was to take place between us, and I gave my attention to keeping a clear head to follow her statement and take in its details.

CHAPTER XXIII.

‘PART of what I would have you know,’ she began her narrative, ‘is known to you, I believe, already, so I need not weary you with its repetition. You know that in the very hour of my marriage my husband was arrested. Within the day’s space he was executed. You know this?’

I nodded.

‘But you do not know by whose machinations it was all done?’

I shook my head.

‘It was the doing of that viper, Henri de Marigny.’

At the words ‘that viper’ came vividly to mind that scene on Ashdown Forest as we pursued that same viper, and the smuggler, disabling with his riding-thong an adder in the path, had said, ‘I would we were leaving the Frenchman scotched after a like fashion.’ In my heart I too could now find it to echo that wish most cordially.

‘But why?’ I asked, as she paused. ‘Why should he wish——’

‘Henri de Marigny,’ she said, ‘is a cousin—that is to say, he is only distantly related, not so nearly as what you in England would imply by “cousins.” But we were brought up together, and have seen much of each other all our lives. It has even pleased him to consider himself in love with me. As a matter of fact, he was never, he could be never, by the very nature of the man, in love with anybody but himself. But he was poor, he always was in desperate straits. How Henri de Marigny is living here in the style that he manages to support I, who know his affairs fairly, cannot understand. I have my fancies on the subject, but of them in a moment. To proceed in order: Henri de Marigny was poor. I had a certain property of my own——’

‘That is the worst news you have told me yet,’ I could not

help interrupting, for the fact that she was an heiress seemed to put her more than ever above the hopes of such as I.

She coloured slightly as if she understood the significance, adding with a smile, 'It is in much jeopardy of being lost to me now, under the Republic'; and then coloured again, almost as if she feared these words could be construed into an invitation. She hurriedly resumed :

'Henri made proposals of marriage for me, but my guardians, knowing both his character and his situation, would not receive them. And then my husband asked me in marriage. He was eligible, he was rich, his character was unsullied; but he was Royalist. Henri was—anything that you please. After his rebuff in his proposals of marriage he behaved as perfectly as you can imagine that he would. "Of course," he said, "he understood that his beautiful cousin (so he called me) was not for such a *rapin* as he," and so on, "but we would always be friends, would we not?" And of course I was delighted to find it so, and when my husband made proposals for me Henri was so kind, so helpful. D'Estourville was Royalist—yes—and his lands were always in danger of confiscation; but he, Henri, would use his influence—yes, and so on. He had some influence—how obtained we never knew—with the Republican people; the fact actually being that he had sold himself to them, that he was their agent, their spy. And so all went well, "as merry as a marriage bell," as you English say, until the very wedding day; and then my poor husband was arrested almost at the Mairie door, and within a few hours executed, with some form of mock trial, for complicity, as they said, in the plot of the Prince de Condé to assassinate the First Consul—a plot that, if it ever existed, he was as innocent of as a baby, and never even knew the Prince de Condé except by sight. Ah, my friend,' and her excitement grew as she told the tale that she had begun in so business-like a tone, 'do you wonder that I am a woman with a mystery about me—that other thoughts occupy my mind than those that fill the minds of women who have not suffered as I have suffered? Do you wonder that my mind is occupied with one thought only, day or night—the thought of my revenge on that arch-devil, Henri de Marigny, who was the plotter of it all?'

'He was the plotter?'

'Yes,' she said, 'he was the plotter. He thought that once he should marry me safe to the Comte d'Estourville I should be out of my guardians' power, that I should be mistress of myself

and of my fortune, and that he would be able to work on a woman's weakness to accomplish his end—to marry me, and make me and my fortune his—my fortune and me, I should say: let us order them as his mind orders them. That was his idea. I was, perhaps, just a little less tractable than he expected. For two years he has persecuted me with his attentions. For two years I have striven to avoid him, but in vain. But that time I have not all wasted. I know more of him, far more of him, now than I knew two years ago. I know—at least I more than guess—what the sources of his income are—how he lives. He is a spy in the service of the Republic. When I made up my mind to come to England to escape the troubles of my unhappy France he volunteered to accompany me. He did more: he insisted on accompanying me, although I begged him not. I could not forbid him. He had a right on the boat that brought me as much as I. So he came. But,' she said, rising from her seat, as if to give her words the greater emphasis—'but it was not merely to accompany me that he has come. I do not flatter myself so far as that. He had, and he has, projects of some importance—designs that are of no good to this kind country of yours, that gives us poor people an asylum. Something, some plot or other, he has on hand, and it behoves us—you and me together, if you will stand my friend—to find out that plot, to discover what it is, to thwart it, and if possible—'she spoke the words with a concentration of hate that it was dreadful to see exhibited by a young, a beautiful, and a tender-hearted woman—'punish the plotter as he deserves.'

I fear that by this time it will only be too clear to any reader of this narrative that I am not one of those whose minds arrive at facts and conclusions with a brilliant rapidity. I have a certain tenacity of purpose, I believe, when I once see my way distinctly, but in no point do my mental qualities differ more widely from those of the great Admiral whose outward figure my own somewhat resembled than in the slowness with which I obtain grasp of a situation. For all that, however, I was already beginning to see light, by virtue of the Comtesse d'Estourville's explanation, on many things that had been dark to me about her relations with her cousin, when she illuminated the subject much more clearly by adding, 'You will understand now, I think, what must have appeared to you so unintelligible before—that I should continue to all seeming such excellent friends with my cousin, after what you yourself told me of the affair of the despatches.'

'Well,' I said, 'I must admit that I was puzzled. You do not know how I have wondered and have doubted. Ah, I do not think you would ever bear to speak to me again if you did know.'

'But I do know,' she said. 'It was inevitable. You *must* have doubted, *must* have mistrusted. You would be more than human had you not.'

'And you, I think, to understand so perfectly, *are* more than human.'

'My friend,' she said, with a sad little smile, 'I am *very* human. I fear just now I have given way to passion; I spoke with hatred. It is not hatred that I feel; it is justice that I want—justice for my dead husband and just punishment for that living villain who killed him.'

'And I had him in my hand,' I said, 'and let him go.'

'Hush!' she answered, 'oh, hush! I did not mean that. It is terrible talking like that. Ah!' And she sat at the table and covered her face with her hands. 'We women were not made to be conspirators. Conspirators should be built of some sterner stuff. We are but a tangle of inconsistent motives.'

Then she began to cry gently, a thing I had never known her do before, a thing that I had rather thought her incapable of doing.

'Ah,' I said, 'don't do that—for God's sake, don't!'

'And why should I not cry?' she asked, with a defiant kind of pathos, lifting a tear-stained face from her hands. 'Is it not all I have of womanly that is left me? The guillotine took my father and my mother when I was just of age to have learned to love them; it took my husband when I was wedded to him but an hour. Had I a chance to be anything but hard, self-reliant? I know, my friend, how you think of me. Let me have a few tears to remind me I am a woman.'

For my own part, as she spoke, it cost me no light effort to remember that tears were exclusively the woman's privilege, so deeply did her words touch my heart. I had to swallow back a sob of pity for her as I replied:

'No, no! I have never thought of you like that. A little proud I might have thought, determined—you have set me a puzzle oftentimes—but unwomanly—never! I have never seen in you aught that was not consistent in my view with the queen of womanhood that has utter possession of my heart. Oh, Madame d'Estourville, believe me, it was with no expectation of saying to you such wild words as these that I made an effort to see you

before I went from Brighton. The words, I know, are wild, presumptuous, words I ought never to have spoken, and yet they are words of the most profound truth. I worship the very ground you walk on. I love you as I have loved no woman in the world before you, as I can never love a woman in this world again. Ah, can you forgive me that I should speak to you like this ?

She paused a moment or two before she spoke, and her breath came and went quickly, her bosom heaved and her eyes looked luminously out on some vision that was not of the material things before them. Then she said, speaking with an effort :

‘ Yes, I forgive you. I can forgive you even this. But it is a deal to ask of me. Far more difficult to forgive than when you begged me to forgive your rudeness. The latter you did not mean ; the former——’

‘ The former I do mean with my whole heart and soul,’ I insisted audaciously.

‘ Hush, monsieur, hush !’ she said ; ‘ I entreat you, do not say these words. It is a disloyalty for me to listen to them. Do you not understand that I am vowed, dedicated, devoted (how do you say it ?) to the memory of him who was my husband ?’

‘ Madame,’ I said hardily, for I was very desperate, and my chance might never come again, ‘ that is a romance, a sentiment, is it not ? A man to whom you had been wedded but an hour before these wretches tore him from you, a man of whom you had seen but little.’

‘ It is all true, monsieur, all true,’ she said, with her own sweet reasonableness, which hardly deserted her even when she was most moved. ‘ It is true ; but he was a good man, a man whose memory I have vowed to respect.’

‘ In what way, madame ?’

‘ In the way that forbids my listening to such words as you lately spoke to me.’

‘ For ever, madame ?’

‘ For ever—at least, no,’ correcting herself. ‘ I cannot say what is not true to you. My vow (it was a wicked vow, maybe, to make ; my confessor, at least, would absolve me from it, I know, with a penance for making it)—but vow I did, and on my own heart it is binding, that never until I had satisfaction for my husband’s murder would I listen to words of any man’s love.’

‘ And has that vow ever cost you anything to keep, madame ?’ I asked.

At that her graceful body swayed a little, like some tall plant that a light wind takes, her breath came quick and short again, her eyes half closed; I thought for a moment that she would fall.

'Ah,' she said faintly, 'you must not ask me—never, never, till——'

By way of helping the words as she paused, incapable of speech, I held her in my arms, and for a brief ecstatic moment we forgot the world in that embrace. Then she pushed me from her, almost with violence, almost with anger.

'Go away from me, monsieur—leave me,' she said. 'You have made me forget my vow, the memory of my husband. You have degraded me.'

'Oh no, my queen,' I pleaded; 'do not say so. You have stooped, indeed, but it is to conquer. A poor victory truly,' I said with a rueful smile, 'a broken commander of a sunk despatch boat.'

Sometimes one is lucky, even with a woman, and the most blundering steersman may find the right channel, without a rag of a chart, to her heart. So now she, touched by my forlorn estate, and overdone, no doubt, by the stress of varying emotions to which the last half-hour had subjected her, sank into a chair before the table and covered her face with her hands in a way that I had grown to look on as characteristic of her. But she held her two hands so not more than a moment before she stole out one of them, wet as it was with the tears from her dear eyes, for me to take it in my own hard and brown one, where I detained it, pressing it again and again to my lips.

Presently she drew it away gently and firmly, and raised her head, looking at me through a mist of tears.

'There, that will do, friend,' she said with a smile like sunshine through rain. 'That is enough. You have captured my secret; the last secret that the Fair Enigma holds is yours: that she loves you. Now you have no more to learn. The Sphinx has no more riddles for you. You must find the world quite dull.'

Then I kissed her again, she making but little protest. And when that was done she said, 'But I mean it, I would have you know I mean it, that I will not wed with'—a pause—'oh, any man, until I have found some means of bringing my husband's murderer—and that chief villain in particular—to justice. You will beware of him, will you not, with all caution, as you would avoid a snake?' she added, with a solicitude that made my heart

beat fast. I am glad you are leaving Brighton to-night. Ah, yes,' she said, as I made a gesture of dissent, 'you are to adhere to your determination as to that. I beg you, an you love me. For the one thing, it is for your own safety, dear friend; and for another, I could never play the part I have still to play here with your eyes upon me. I should ever be seeking out those eyes—I have had enough ado to keep from seeking them as it is—and our secret, for secret it must remain, would surely be discovered. For every reason it is better you should go.'

'Yes, you are right,' I said reluctantly; 'I see that you are right, but it is very hard.'

'I have to stay here and play my part. That, too, is a hard part to play, and will be harder than ever now. This much I know already, that he is here for some purpose, that dear cousin of mine; and we know enough to be sure that it is no good one. It is not merely to spy the land, to report the doings of the Government as confided to the Prince of Wales, that he is come. (It is not I, either, who vouched for him with the Prince, as you once did me the honour, monsieur—with a smile—to insinuate; but he has advices, as likely as not forged, or from Philippe Egalité, perhaps—they always were friends. Why does your Prince have anything to do with such a man?) Well, in any case, he will of course report all he hears; but I am convinced that there is more than this, and find it out I shall and will. And, my friend, if it should be a matter wherein I shall need your help, and shall send a word to you and say "Come," you will not be long in coming, I daresay.'

So then it was necessary to protest and to vow and the rest of it. And I do not know that there was much more of general interest until Madame d'Arcy came in from her drive, and broke into cackles of thin, derisive laughter at the sight of us still there.

'And ye've been sitting just so, o' the opposite sides of the room, for twa hours, I'll warrant. Eh, I'm sorry but my poor room was nae longer, that ye could na' gae farther apart.' The wicked old woman covering us with confusion unspeakable!

But on the one point my Hortense—as I will now make so very bold as to style her—was fixed as adamant: that she would name no day, no date, would hold out to me no hope that I should marry her until she had resolved this wretched matter of the business on which M. de Marigny had been pleased to honour England with his presence; until, as she persisted, she had justice for her husband's murder. It was a romantic notion. 'Young

women,' Madame d'Arcy had told me, 'ought to be romantic.' And certainly I had reason later to bless that vein of romantic fancy in Madame d'Estourville; for, but for that, many things in this world of ours (not merely in the little cranny of it that is occupied with my doings) would have been different, and not differing for the better.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I FOUND life at Buckhurst proceeding much in its old uneventful course, marked only by the perpetually recurrent disagreements between my Aunt Dorset, acting for the young Duke, and the commoners and the inter-tenants, that had their never exactly settled rights on the Ashdown Forest. I was both surprised and annoyed to learn that the 'arrant failure' kept up his proper character in failing to rejoin his wife, as the Skipper of the Cave had promised me that he would command him to rejoin her. The wife was more than half disposed to regard me as the cause of his disappearance, the more so perhaps when she found me unable to assign a reason for it.

All the while that the trivial life went on, with its little incidents, at Brighton and elsewhere, the whole of England remained in a state of utmost perturbation by reason of events that might at any moment happen. The great event to which all looked forward as a possibility, and certain croakers predicted as a certainty, was the invasion of England by the French. Between England and the realisation of this project lay the vigilance of the fleets that guarded our shores, for the words, never to be forgotten, of the man who had a knack of making his least likely words come true, Buonaparte, the Corsican, were constantly on the lips of Englishmen: 'Give me command of the Channel for three days, and I will put an army across the sea that will conquer England.' Men said that he had the flat-bottomed transports ready waiting at Boulogne. It was a time of the deepest anxiety for every Englishman, and more particularly for those who lived in the south-eastern counties, that lay especially in the course of attack. The place of refuge to which all the families of the county of Sussex were to fly in case a landing was effected was Copthorne Common, near East Grinstead, on the edge of Ashdown Forest. Just a little nearer London than to the sea,

it was hoped that they might at least be in safety there till a covering force could be sent for their protection, or dispositions made for their removal to a harbour of greater safety. Our naval guard consisted of the fleets under Calder and Cornwallis watching the French and Spanish ships in Brest and Ferrol, the former having lately parted from a portion of the French fleet that he had beaten with some loss on July 22. In the meantime nothing at all had been heard of Nelson, who had big business on his hands, his Lordship being concerned for the safety from attack of, first, England, then Egypt, then the West Indies. The last news coming from him officially to London was of date July 27, and even then he had reported that he did not know whither his course in pursuit of the French might take him, but intimated a probability that he might go to Ireland, for it was feared the French might get a foothold in that island, with the aid of the disaffected people, and thence slip across to England. On the 20th, at Buckhurst, the tremendous news came suddenly to us that Lord Nelson was in London. He had arrived at Portsmouth, in his ship the *Victory*, on the 18th, and when the ship was made out and the great Admiral, whom all looked on as the saviour of England, came to port, the scene of enthusiasm is said to have been such as makes a beggar of one's best effort at description. However, I had it only on hearsay; but I saw personally the delight with which the people received a sight of his figure (so impossible not to recognise, with the absence of the arm that he had lost in the people's service) as soon as he made his appearance in London. It had long been known, widely known, that there was a likelihood of his returning soon. His health had suffered in the long and vexatious dawdle in the Mediterranean, before Toulon, and his leave had been signed by the Admiralty a month or two before. His own desire to return home, for a while at least, was very strong. Nothing but his urgent sense of public duty had kept him at sea.

If the nation at large could feel a quickening of the pulse at the news of the great Admiral's arrival, I, for my selfish part, had a particular reason for hailing his return. With that came my last chance of being righted in the eyes of my professional chiefs, who, I felt deeply, had done me less than my due. Had the circumstances, as coloured by De Marigny's version, been presented to and believed by them, then, indeed, I could better have understood their cold treatment of me; but as it was I felt that it was unmerited and illogical, and that in Lord Nelson lay my best

and my last hope to set it right. Nelson was in London on the 20th, on which day he also went to Merton, in the evening. Whether he was in London on the 19th I cannot say—I am not sure—but (and I mention this to show the kind heart of the man, and his generous, unselfish thought of every soul under his command) it was no later than the 21st that I received from him, through his secretary, a despatch saying: ‘Lord Nelson desires me to state that he was particularly concerned to learn the circumstances under which you lost your ship, and more especially at the loss you have personally received on that account. His Lordship begs me to add that he has made strong representations to the Lords of the Admiralty on your behalf, which he does not think will fail of their effect. He also begs that you will honour him with your company at Merton during the next few days.’ Appended was a note in Nelson’s own handwriting:—

‘Forgive me that I do not write with my own hand. Had I but two I perhaps might, but as it is correspondence is so heavy. Have spoken very strongly, but not nearly so strongly as your case deserves, for you. They have treated you shamefully. Come to see us at Merton and bring your kit for a night. You will find just a family party—a simple welcome but a hearty one. Your friend,

‘NELSON AND BRONTE.’

I went about during the whole of that day in a state of delight that was quite ridiculous. I found myself with a perpetual foolish smile playing on my lips, which I had to straighten by an effort, to correct such folly. I was like a boy that has just received his first letter from his mistress; and I detected myself wondering that this kindly letter caused me a more poignant emotion of pleasure than any that I had received from Hortense d’Estourville. I had made up my mind that I would never make confession of this fact to her, but since I have noted it down here it is likely that some day she will read it. But she will know me well enough to forgive it then. Suffice it that never in my life did letter give me greater pleasure than this one. My position in the service I regarded at once as recovered, for Nelson, of course, could be denied nothing that he asked, whether for himself or for a subordinate, and to have suffered temporarily a loss of prestige, only to gain the generous and indignant support of Lord Nelson, was a good bargain indeed. I was especially

pleased with the evidence of his friendship that he showed in asking me to Merton, because it would give me an opportunity of stating the whole truth of the case with regard to the despatches and the detaining of De Marigny before the latter put in his own lying version. I could regard this as no breach of my undertaking to Lord Barham. I could not conceive that the interests of the service or of the nation could suffer through Lord Nelson's knowing the truth with regard to his own despatches.

CHAPTER XXV.

I FOUND assembled in the house at Merton a large family party, such as Lord Nelson's letter had led me to expect, consisting of the Canon, his brother, the Canon's wife and children, and a sister's child. Lady Hamilton's mother was also there. With the exception of the renowned host himself, I had seen none of them before, and it was with no little interest that I beheld for the first time the beauty that had exercised so great an influence on Lord Nelson's life, and had given occasion for so many evil tongues to wag in so many a discussion of affairs that were none of theirs. I had felt sure that it must be beauty of no common kind that could enthrall so completely a man of Nelson's character; but for all that I must confess myself amazed at the opulence and almost the exuberance of Lady Hamilton's loveliness. It is not, indeed, quite correct to say that it was beauty of no common type, for in fact it was of no remarkable refinement. I may best, perhaps, express my estimate of it by the paradox of saying that it was rather a common type of beauty carried to a most uncommon degree of perfection, both of feature and of colouring. Her open adulation of the great hero, her exhibition of his medals, insignia, and every mark of distinction that he had earned in his remarkable career, would have been absurd and ridiculous had he who was thus belauded been anything less than Nelson. As it was, Nelson, never, to say the truth, averse to a little theatrical display, suffered it all in smiling part, as who would say, 'This is not the display I should wish on my own account, but it is to be pardoned, and I may even take some pleasure and pride in it all, as a mark of the love for me of this woman whom I love.' That was the kind of sentiment towards it all that his attitude appeared to me to express; and I am

careful to make note of it, since I have more than once heard animadversions on the display as something unworthy so great a man.

'The apotheosis of a common type' is the phrase employed by a celebrated portrait-painter to describe the beauty of Lady Hamilton; but however that may be—and I think it hits the mark well—yet in my own humble judgment it would be quite improper to describe her nature or temperament as a common one. A certain refinement it is to be confessed that it missed, as it was perhaps impossible that it should not miss it under the circumstances of Lady Hamilton's early training, or lack of training; but by way of compensation she had unusual artistic gifts, with a love of bright hues and a rare taste in their arrangement, added to musical ability of a high order—a woman opulently gifted in taste and temperament, in form and feature. Such, as she appeared to me, was the lady who dispensed the hospitality of Lord Nelson's house at Merton. She was pleased to greet me with exceeding kindness as her hero's friend, and this, with Lord Nelson's unfailing thoughtfulness, combined to place me quickly at my ease among the large family circle.

I have no need to repeat the generous warmth of his Lordship's expressions of indignation at the treatment I had received from the naval authorities, nor the far too kind eulogium that he was pleased to pass on my accepting the responsibility of sinking my ship in order that his despatches might the sooner be placed in the hands to which they were to be confided. When I came, in my rapid sketch of the events that befell me on landing, to the theft of the despatches, to their recovery and their ultimate delivery under broken seal, his face became very anxious, and by the agitation of the stump of his lost arm I knew that his mind was much put about.

'That is a grave matter,' he said at once. 'The arrival of despatches under broken seal is serious enough in itself, and I only marvel that Lord Barham was so light with you on that point. But that which is far more important is that the fellow had time for their perusal. To what use may he not have put that knowledge?'

I then explained to him that I had the man detained, in the manner I have detailed above, until the arrival of later despatches seemed to make the news of the former out of date and unimportant.

On hearing this his Lordship was not a little relieved, but

added that it would have been better to have kept the scoundrel under restraint until he himself, who knew what was in the despatches, or Lord Barham gave orders for his release. Bitterly did I now regret that I had not—if, indeed, it were possible—done so; but of the possibility there was a grave question, by all that the smuggler had told me of the way the clever scoundrel had got round the men who were his guard; and when I mentioned this doubt, there was again a certain sense of relief in his Lordship's manner. But when I came to tell him that this very man, no sooner was his liberty recovered, appeared in the intimate circle of the Prince, than his righteous indignation knew no bounds.

‘But why did you not denounce the scoundrel forthwith, sir, in the first moment that his face appeared in such company?’

It took me then some little pains to explain to him how entirely unsupported, or supported only by what very doubtful testimony my statement must have been; and after a few words of generous wrath at the possibility of accepting a Frenchman's word in preference to that of a British officer, the agitation of his mind calmed down, the clearness of his logical vision came back to him, and he admitted that silence under all the circumstances was the best, and indeed the only, course for me.

‘But you have been foully wronged, sir, foully wronged, and in my service. But you may set your mind at ease, sir. I will see—indeed, I have already done so—that you are righted. It is not only a pleasure but an act of duty. You may rely on me.’

I thanked his Lordship, of course, very cordially, and our conversation passed on to other subjects, with which this narrative has no concern.

It was a pleasant, quiet retreat, this of Merton; a great peace seemed over it all. Lying so low by the river Wandle, it must be plaguy rheumatic in winter, was a thought that came to me, though I did not express it; but at this season there was no rheumatism in the air, and everything was very peaceful under the afternoon sky. We walked beside the little rivulet that Lady Hamilton had been pleased to lead through the garden from the river and dub with the name of Nile, in memory of one of Nelson's great battles. Just now some white-plumed ducks were sailing in the brooklet, and little Horatia came down, calling to them, and threw them some crumbs from her tea. Lord Nelson summoned the child to him, and sent her off again with a pat on the head and a few kind words, after which he grew very silent and thoughtful a while. I too was silent, not liking to intrude upon his mood of

brooding, out of which he presently roused himself to ask me the curious question :

‘Has it struck you ever as singular that, out of all men in the Bible history, David—David, the man of many faults, of grievous sins—was the man after God’s own heart?’

‘One most grievous sin he certainly committed,’ I replied, with my mind on Uriah set in the forefront of the battle.

‘One most grievous sin,’ Lord Nelson repeated thoughtfully. ‘And afterwards God forgave him. He came to God with the trustfulness that a child should have in coming to a loving father. And God forgave. In spite of his grievous sin he was the man after God’s heart.’

‘That is so, my Lord,’ I said ; ‘so we are told.’

‘Ay—so we are told. And do you think God now will be as ready to forgive one grievous sin, that has been repented of with deepest remorse by many years of subsequent life, honourable, without sin—save, I should say, those daily sins of the heart and mind against which we strive in vain?’

‘Doubtless,’ I said ; ‘my Lord, God’s mercy does not change.’

He seemed on the point of adding more ; but after a slight pause he bethought him better of his intention. He shivered a little.

‘The evening air grows chill,’ he said. ‘Shall we go in?’

‘As your Lordship pleases,’ I said, and we walked in silence to the house, my mind busied with the application—had they any personal application—of his words. To this day I cannot be certain they had ; and yet some meaning other than a mere abstract discussion of the Bible problem his Lordship must have intended by them. I have no comment to add to them, save that I will append this extract—let those judge of it as they please who read—from a codicil to the will of Sir William Hamilton : ‘The copy of Madame Le Brun’s picture of Emma, in enamel, by Bone, I give to my dearest friend, Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronté—a very small token of the great regard I have for his Lordship, the most virtuous, loyal, and truly brave character I ever met with. God bless him, and shame fall on all those who do not say Amen!’

At table Lady Hamilton was the principal talker, Lord Nelson contenting himself with a kindly word or two now and again when appealed to, and being ever on the watch to see that all had what they wanted. He was always averse to the habit of sitting long over wine when dinner was finished, and soon led the way into the drawing-room, where Lady Hamilton sang to us very finely,

as I, who am no judge in such matters, should imagine, accompanying herself on the spinet. In an interval of the music I ventured to remind his Lordship of a promise made long ago in the Mediterranean, that he would come down to see the fine oaks in and about the neighbourhood of Buckhurst Park. It was a matter that he had very much at heart, and had addressed a memorandum some years before, on the subject of the cultivation and care of the oaks in the Forest of Dean, to the Prime Minister, conceiving that if more attention were not given to this important particular our Navy would soon be hard put to it for the material of their ships. To my great joy he instantly engaged himself to redeem this promise, which I had already mentioned to my Aunt Dorset; whereupon she had at once said how glad she would be to entertain so distinguished a guest beneath her roof if he would avail himself of her hospitality.

‘The remaining days of this month,’ his Lordship said, ‘I have promised myself that I will spend here at home after so long an absence, but on September 1 I will, if her Grace have the kindness to receive me, be her guest for a night or two.’ And so the matter was settled then and there. Subsequently we discovered the first of the month to be a Sunday, on which day his Lordship was averse to employing the services of man or beast, except in a case of necessity, and it was arranged that he should come on the second, being a Monday. All the while we talked over these projects I cannot recall that a servant was in the room, a circumstance that I certainly did not note particularly at the time, though later it came to be matter of some moment and discussion.

In the morning his Lordship carried me with him in his phaeton to London, and later in the same day I took the midday coach and went down to my home on the Forest, excited, perhaps out of due measure, by the prospect of his impending visit.

(To be concluded.)

At the Sign of the Ship.

IT is not to be supposed that we often read the essays of Mr. Joseph Addison, who died so long ago. Like Huckleberry Finn, we take no stock in dead persons. But, if we do glance at the works of an author once reckoned ingenious, we are in danger of temptation to spiritual pride. For example, the politicians of the fair sex are now many, intelligent, and earnest; and we listen to them with respect, and a desire to be improved and elevated. So it was in the far-distant age of Boadicea, who, being British, was a Pro-Briton. But Mr. Addison merely sneers at lady politicians. He asks women 'to distinguish themselves as tender mothers and faithful wives, rather than as furious partisans.' Why should not a woman be a furious partisan, as well as a tender mother and faithful wife? A man may be a faithful husband, and tender father, but yet a furious partisan, and no disability for furious partisanship ought to be imposed on the fair sex. We know that they may now go to a constituency for which a father, husband, son, or brother is standing,—and canvas against him. Addison would not have approved of this legitimate and even noble conduct. He says, 'If women must be showing their zeal for the public, let it not be against those who are perhaps of the same family, or at least of the same religion or nation, but against those who are the open, professed, undoubted enemies of their faith, liberty, and country.' Such were the pitiful restrictions which this over-rated essayist was anxious to impose on politicians of the fair sex. We are apt to be puffed up by considering our own advance on the ideas of the early eighteenth century. Let us honour the ladies who then wore their patches on the right side of their faces, to prove that they stood up for 'the open, professed, undoubted enemies of our faith, liberty, and country,'—by whom Addison probably meant the Tories: he being a Whig. If Pro-Boer ladies would only profess their opinions by way of patches, we should know where we were, and could make

no such mistakes as now occasionally occur in conversation. Yet there was real progress in Addison's time, for he admits, (though in his reactionary way he regrets the fact) that wine was made by scientific processes, without any tincture of the juice of the grape : just as at present.

* * *

An odious point about Addison is that he does not recognise in woman 'a spirit like a flame,' a soaring yet a serious thing. 'I consider woman,' (he says,) 'a beautiful romantic animal, that may be adorned with furs and feathers, pearls and diamonds, ores and silks.' This is impudent and irritating! In search of more modern and worthy ideas of woman, I turn to a periodical especially published for her perusal. Here one finds two columns of 'Illustrated Dress Advice.' Now there is no such matter in our serials for men. The Adviser recommends the goods of various shopkeepers to the inquiring fair. *Toupées, voiles, matinées, tropical lingerie, coiffures, guipure*, and other adornments for the 'beautiful romantic animal,' are the themes. 'Slenderine reduces the double chin' of a beautiful animal too lavishly gifted by nature. 'Eastern Oil' and 'Blobbs's Ammonia' are recommended. Maidens are taught how to *onduler* and *friser*, and what can be done in *faillottes*, 'a term inexplicable to the Muse.' 'Proper French letter writing' is recommended as a study for daughters, but we hear more of *taffetas* and *mousseline* than of following in the track of Madame de Sévigné. *Bretelles*, 'epaulette straps,' and 'an appreciable *basque*' are dwelt on lovingly. Do you know what is Addison's English for 'an appreciable *basque*'? Perhaps I do not quite know what a *basque* is, but Addison's word for a similar adornment is familiar to all students of parliamentary history. Next we meet 'a cunning coatee and an *insinuating shirt*,' and 'a trio of original blouses.' There are other topics, but the greatest of these is adornment for the animal who is romantic and beautiful. Could Mr. Addison read our ladies' illustrated papers one fears that he would deny the proverb

Souvent femme varie.

The sex, he would say, is but little altered in the course of two centuries.

'Does human nature ever alter?' is a good question for a debating society. If we only look at the serials expressly

designed for women, we might reckon that her nature has changed little between the time of our mother Eve, and that of the old *Spectator*, and *Free Holder*. On the other hand there are all the activities, learned, political, practical, literary, and artistic, of modern womankind. The question is whether these novel pursuits and ideas will ever be affected by the vast majority of the sex. How little we all have wandered from the ancient human type, how uniform we remain, on the whole, how thin is our varnish of civilisation, may be learned from a book which I mentioned last month, 'The Mystic Rose,' by Mr. Ernest Crawley.¹ 'The fact is that human nature remains potentially primitive,' Mr. Crawley writes. Human nature, truly, is always 'primitive,' and always will be, because the facts at the basis of our lives can never be altered. We must eat and drink, or die. If we can get nothing to eat but each other—'but the subject why pursue?'—we should be primitive enough! Then we are divided into male and female, and on that point we are primitive also, and always must be.

* * *

Readers of the male sex will admit, for example, that women are sometimes dreadfully in the way; and ladies frankly confess the same truth about men. The fair allow that they do not want their husbands to be hanging about the house all day. The normal British male leaves his home and pleasing wife after breakfast, and does not see her again till dinner or supper time. The man goeth forth to his labour, to his office, his farm, his shop, his studio, or whatever it may be, including his club. The real reason why most literary characters are unhappy in marriage is merely that theirs is a Home Industry. They and their wives see far too much of each other. Men and women are such different creatures that they are unfit to be always hanging about together. This is a fact primitive and eternal, it is part of the nature of things.

* * *

Now, looking at Mr. Crawley's book, we find that most uncivilised races have recognised and act on these obvious facts. When they have houses, they usually arrange separate apartments for the ladies. They never let women enter their clubs, nor do we. 'In Ceram women are forbidden to enter the men's club house.' 'In London,' we may add, 'women are not welcomed in the

¹ Macmillans.

pavilion at Lord's, or the clubs in Pall Mall.' The only difference is that we do not 'taboo' our clubs, that is, we do not make the women believe that they will drop down dead if they cross the threshold. But probably the intelligent savage does not believe it himself. It is only a story told to frighten the fair sex away. 'Among the Gauchos of Uruguay, women show a marked tendency to huddle together.' But so they do at afternoon tea, and, generally, before luncheon, in civilised countries. It is human female nature so to do, or, as Mr. Crawley says, it is 'the same biological tendency.' Among the Fijian men there are many words which must not be used before Fijian ladies, just as among ourselves. But I do not feel sure that 'religious fears' first prompted many of these customs. To me it seems that men and women, finding that they 'disturbed each other d—nably,'—as Byron told his wife (a Fijian would have been more polite), invented bogie stories to keep each other out of the way. They did not begin, I suspect, by thinking each other dangerous for some magical reason or other; they began by finding each other tiresome or inconvenient on many occasions. Then they invented magical reasons to frighten the girls out of the smoking-room, or the study, or the canoe, or wherever they were not wanted. 'If you come here, your hair will drop out, or the bogie man will come for you,' they would begin by saying, and then, in course of time, some of them would come to believe the fiction. Neither sex is so credulous now, unluckily, for I feel sure that ladies would often be glad to frighten men out of their drawing-rooms; and that men do not want ladies in smoking-rooms.

* * *

Mr. Crawley, if I follow his argument, takes the very proper but too often neglected, distinction between customs and ways of acting or thinking which are survivals, and others which savages and we moderns practise alike because 'it is our nature to.' If I am afraid, say, to walk under a ladder, and make a certain gesture to protect me from the consequences in the way of bad luck, that is a 'survival.' The mere notion of 'luck' is a relic of primitive metaphysics which I have outgrown. I do not *really* believe that it is unlucky to walk under a ladder. I even know why it was thought unlucky, and the reason is not a good reason. Bad luck is only *bu-ku-ru*, as the natives of Costa Rica call it; it is an illogical notion. Again, the protective gesture, when you walk under a ladder, is intended to avert the evil eye, in which also one

does not believe. Yet I make the gesture, or go outside the ladder: it is just as well to keep on the safe side. These and many other practices are 'survivals,' senseless relics of a dead state of thought. But not to want a lady (or almost every lady, for there are exceptions,) in a boat, on a sea-trout loch, is not a 'survival,' though savages also do not want women in boats when they are fishing. The reason, that the fair sex entangle your line, get the flies stuck in their hair, and need you to gilly for them, remains a good solid reason. In the same way, if I believe in ghosts (so-called,) that is not a 'survival,' though the savage believes in too many, because my reason for the belief may be not traditional, but experimental.

* * *

The purpose of Mr. Crawley's book (by the way it is not a book for the drawing-room table) is to explain the origin of marriage laws. Many theories have been made as to how and why some persons are not allowed to marry others. So far, I have no theory at all, though I possess a manuscript work on the subject, by a friend now dead, who had lived most of his life among savages. His theory was entirely unlike that of Mr. Crawley, or of any other author known to me, and is certainly most ingenious. I do not say that it will hold water, nor am I convinced that Mr. Crawley's will hold water: we have not yet sufficient information to be certain. But Mr. Crawley does seem to have cleared up two mysteries of early custom; first, why men must boycott their wives' mothers: second, why the husband pretends to be the mother of his child. (The *Couvade*.) As to one of the main points of his argument, he seems to have overlooked a lovely illustration in the book of Sir John Mandeville. Sir John was not a veracious writer, but he cannot have invented the strange superstition to which one can only allude: he must have taken it from the work of some genuine traveller.

* * *

In recent books of philosophy one reads about things, organs of animals and so forth, being evolved, not for the actual extant needs of the creature as he stands, but with an eye, as it were, on purposes remote in the future. This looks like rather speculative philosophy, but, if ever the history of our race is written, it will probably be found that when wild in woods the noble savage ran, he developed a number of ideas and customs, often in appearance

idiotic and unseemly, but capable of being evolved into the most useful and indispensable institutions. No doubt the philosophers just spoken of will say that here was human evolution controlled by a prescience of the future. But one foresees the argument of the opposition.

* * *

By a misprint in the 'Ship' of April, I was made to say that Mr. Clodd called Eusapia 'Eusopio.' 'Eusapio' was what I meant to write, and Mr. Clodd's 'Eusapio' itself was probably another misprint for Eusapia, the real name of an ingenious Neapolitan lady. The correct spelling is of no great moment, still, the person who affects to work miracles in the dark, and whose claims are more or less accepted by several foreign men of science, is a woman, Eusapia, not a man, Eusapio. When I first heard of her, it was in an essay headed 'Experiments with Eusapia,' and I conceived that Eusapia was some newly invented drug of the same kind as opium or haschich!

* * *

A correspondent has sent a long account, from a Madras newspaper, of the successful walking through fire of the natives of Southern India. They first dip their naked feet in the milk of the cocoa-nut, and the correspondent (in Ceylon) thinks that the milk is mixed with the juice of the aloe, which gives the immunity from burns. But does it? I have asked my informant to wallow in aloe juice, and then walk through fire, bare-footed. But I do not expect him to make this crucial experiment, either in private or in public. I never read till yesterday that St. Joseph of Cupertino, being entranced, held his hands in a flame without being burned. He was a remarkable person. Entered for an examination for priest's orders, he only knew the answer to one of all possible questions that could be set. It was set, and Joseph got his *testamur* with glory. In another *viva voce* examination he knew nothing at all, but the first lot of candidates did so well, that examiners passed the remainder without asking them anything. These things are cited as miracles, but they look rather like stories invented by the other men to explain why St. Joseph was not plucked. I myself was never so astonished as when I got a First Class in Moderations. But my friends, (who had got Seconds in the previous term,) explained the miracle. One of the examiners, they said, had a nephew in the schools; that nephew *must* get a First, and everybody who did better than

the nephew had to be accommodated with the same distinction. So readily does the human mind invent natural causes for facts obviously miraculous, like my First, and the pass of St. Joseph of Cupertino; or the remarkable properties of the juice of the aloe.

* * *

One is always making 'discoveries,' in history, and often the discovery is a mare's nest. I wonder whether the following find is sound? In Mr. Froude's History (Chapter LXV., 1582) he quotes the report of Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador, to this effect. The Scotch Protestant nobles, in league with Queen Elizabeth, had seized the person of James VI. in the incident known as 'the Raid of Ruthven.' Mendoza heard it whispered that the original idea was to poison James VI. and Queen Mary, then a prisoner in England, and to name the Earl of Huntingdon heir to the English crown. Mr. Froude conjectures that this was the idea of the Earl of Leicester. Later, Chapter LXVI., 1584, Mr. Froude mentions that the Earl of Gowrie, the chief of the conspirators of 1582, confessed, before his execution in 1584, that 'if he had listened to English overtures both the King and his mother would have been put to death.' This Gowrie confessed 'perhaps untruly, perhaps half truly.' Now it does not appear to have occurred to Mr. Froude that Gowrie's confession of 1584 corroborates Mendoza's report of 1582. Mr. Froude's authority, as to Gowrie's confession, is a letter written by Queen Mary in December, 1585. She says that Gowrie voluntarily confessed to the Master of Gray 'that in England it had been arranged, (I do not choose to say by whom,) to slay my son and myself on the same day.' Now the word of the Master was not worth a rotten nut. But we happen to possess the letter which Gowrie himself wrote, under assurance of pardon, as he imagined, and he certainly does say that he knew of a plot to kill Mary and James. But he adds that in saying this he is not confessing to guilty foreknowledge of treason. Far from that, he is giving valuable information. By this he means that the plot was not a Scotch plot, and therefore *treasonable*, but an English plot, involving murder, but not treason. The distinction is rather delicate, and did Gowrie no good. He was decapitated. But it does appear to me that Mendoza's information, at the time of the plot (1582) was correct, and that Gowrie was aware of this ruthless English scheme, to which he confessed. Mr. Froude thinks that Gowrie confessed

to a *new* plot, of 1584, 'if he had succeeded *this* time.' But, on reading his letter, and comparing it with that of Mendoza, two years earlier, it seems that both he and Mendoza were speaking of one and the same disgraceful enterprise. The wretched Gowrie was 'let in' for his confession by being told that his letter would arouse the curiosity of the King, who would grant him an interview, when Gowrie might explain the innocence of his intentions. But he never was granted any interview, but condemned on the strength of what he had written. How happy ought modern politicians to deem themselves, for they can do and say what they please, without fear of the axe, the stake, and, as Mr. James Payn added, 'the chop.'

* * *

A most hideous tale is afloat, to the effect that the celebrated Casket Letters of Queen Mary, (on which thousands of essays have been written,) were seen by mortal eyes only twelve years ago, and were probably used as pipe lights by an intelligent voter. The story certainly sounds probable, but I am unwilling to reveal it without further inquiry. The scene of the discovery was, —but no! It is not fair, without more certain testimony (which I expect to obtain), to tell this desolating anecdote. If the letters really were found, it was just where antiquaries ought to have looked for them, and did not. I leave the ingenious to conjecture about the scene of the archæological tragedy.

ANDREW LANG.

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